

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE HOUSE OF SKULLS OR THE BOY MINERS OF BLIZZARD BAY

AND OTHER STORIES

By Jas. C. Merritt



"I am in for it now, sure!" thought George Brandon, and so he was, for one of the Indians pulled away the bear skin which covered him before he had time to get on his feet.

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The House of Skulls

OR, THE BOY MINERS OF BLIZZARD BAY

By JAS. C. MERRITT

CHAPTER I.—Abandoned in the Storm.

One Sunday afternoon in the month of April, about three years ago, just about the time the wonderful gold discoveries in the Klondike country began to be first talked about, a small steamer, called the Sea Lion, was in hard straits among the islands on the inside route between Alaska and Seattle.

It was snowing and miserably cold and chilly; the wind was blowing a perfect blizzard and there was not one among the dozen or so passengers in the cabin who was not anxiously looking forward to their arrival at Seattle, who did not feel absolutely certain that the captain had lost his reckoning altogether and was entirely off his course. Still nobody dared to say so, and what would have been the use of saying so? For it is a poor business to put out one's own ideas to make other people uncomfortable in a time of danger, when said ideas cannot possibly do any good.

At least that is what George Brandon thought that dreary Sunday afternoon, and his friend Harry Brown agreed with him. They were doing their best to make things lively and keep the passengers in good humor, and Miss Blyburn, a young lady of twenty or thereabouts, whose manish dress and manners had attracted some unfavorable comment on board the Sea Lion, was trying her best, too.

"Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, we will sing that hymn again," she exclaimed, turning around on the piano stool.

And Miss Blyburn started off on a good old hymn, in which almost all the passengers heartily joined. All but one, a tall young gentleman, with perfect fitting clothes, high collar and stiff ultra-English manners, who kicked and sneered at everything and had an unpleasant way of staring at you through the monocle, or single glass, which he made the most distressing efforts to hold in his eye.

"What a nuisance!" he drawled, addressing himself to a rough miner, who did not sing simply because he couldn't speak above a whisper on account of a cold. "That squalling makes me tired. As for playing the piano, Miss Blyburn don't know the first thing about it, and——"

"Say, young feller, if you don't like the sing-

ing get out!" whispered the miner, turning on him suddenly. "Go up on deck and kick at the weather, but quit your kicking here."

"Really, you are very impolite," drawled the dude; "but that is just what I was about to do. It's bad enough on deck, but really it is worse to be shut up here and forced to listen to such caterwauling. I shall go and complain to the captain. This annoying of passengers who are forced to take refuge in the cabin must be stopped."

The steamer was rolling fearfully, as she had been for an hour or more, and when the kicking dude had got up two steps he was thrown violently against the partition on the loft, banging his empty head and knocking his monocle out of his eye. He scarcely had time to replace it again and go up one or two more steps when he was thrown with equal violence against the partition on the right, and in that lurch several of the singers gathered about the piano were nearly thrown off their feet.

"Worse and worse!" cried Miss Blyburn, cheerfully. "It's a good thing we are nearly all old sailors or there would be some sick souls among us this day. I wonder what in the world is the matter with the old tub now."

She had scarcely spoken when there was a fearful shock, which caused the rotten old Sea Lion to tremble from stem to stern.

"Oh, my good gracious!" screamed Mr. Herbert Fitzgerald, and he came tumbling down the cabin stairs and fell sprawling at the feet of the singers in a most undignified way.

Some laughed, but others knew only too well what it meant.

"We are on a rock!" cried George Brandon.

"Yes, and we've stove our bottom all to blazes," cried the old miner. "Gentlemen and Miss Blyburn, I don't want to scare any of ye, but——"

Bang! Bang! Again the shock came, twice repeated, with deafening noise each time, and the ripping and tearing of the steamer's timbers could be distinctly heard.

The men all rushed on deck, George Brandon and Harry Brown alone hanging back to look to the safety of Miss Blyburn, who was the only woman beside the stewardess on board.

"Don't be scared," said George. "It may not be as bad as they think."

"Bless your heart, I'm not a bit more frightened than you are, George Brandon," exclaimed that lively little lady. "Why, you are as white as a sheet. Brace up. A fellow can only die once. What's worrying me is my manuscript. I'll get that and be with you in no time. Don't stay back for me."

Thus saying Miss Blyburn popped into her stateroom and George and Harry hurried on deck.

As soon as the boys stepped on the deck they knew that the steamer was doomed. Through the thickly falling snow the dim outlines of an ironbound coast could be seen; an enormous mass of rocks, between two and three hundred feet high, towered before them, against which the sea, was breaking with fearful force. Between the steamer and the base on this awful bluff great black rocks rose out of the water here and there, looking like so many black tombstones, around which the water surged and roared with that terrific force which the Pacific Ocean can exert when it once gets aroused.

It was against one of these rocks that the Sea Lion had first struck. Slipping off of this and passing on she had run between two others and lodged there and now, careened away over to one side, she was filling. Unless something could be done instantly to relieve her she was doomed.

"Where's the captain? Why don't they do something?" cried George, staring around.

Where was the captain? sure enough. Where were the crew? Besides the passengers not a soul was to be seen on deck. Before this was discovered all hands knew that the two best boats were gone.

"They have abandoned the steamer and left us to our fate," cried George. "The cowards! No doubt they saw some way of escape and as the old tub is short of boats they took the best and skipped."

It was undoubtedly so. In the steerage were several Hungarian miners, rough fellows, who crowded on deck with the rest, and no sooner did they learn the situation than they made a rush for one of the two remaining boats and the other miners made a rush for them. A fearful scene followed.

"Room for one more!" shouted the old miner, who was in the second boat and just about to push off. "Pass down, Miss Blyburn, Brandon, or come yourself, but be quick whichever you do."

"Will you go, Miss Blyburn?" asked George, quietly. "Now is your chance."

The girl hesitated for an instant. "No, I will stay with you," she said, "for I know that neither of you two will go and leave me."

"I certainly shall not," said George.

"Nor I," echoed Harry. "If we don't go together we both stay here."

"And you have held back to protect me," said Miss Blyburn. "No, I stay, too."

"Coming or not!" shouted the miner. "We can't stay here all night."

"No," called George. "Go on with your boat, you cowards. Men who will desert a lady at a time like this are not fit company for her in any case."

"Take that for your impudence," cried the miner, drawing his revolver and sending a shot up at George, who was leaning over the rail.

The shot missed and the rowers pulled away

from the steamer, pulled wildly, clumsily, so much so that before they had gone ten yards the boat was driven against one of the rocks.

A wild shout went up, cries of rage and despair.

"She's stove in and they are lost!" cried Harry.

At the same instant a mountainous wave struck the boat. It rose upon the crest and overturned as it fell. A few seconds later and no trace of either the boat or its cowardly occupants could be seen.

CHAPTER II.—Wrecked on an Ironbound Coast.

The other boat meanwhile had disappeared in the darkness and storm and the situation in which our two brave boys and Miss Blyburn found themselves was anything but a cheerful one. Miss Blyburn's cheerfulness was wonderful. She gave one low, shuddering cry when she saw the fate of the boat and for a moment covered her face with her hands. When she looked up again she set her lips firmly, and, grasping the little hand-bag which she had brought up out of the cabin, exclaimed:

"Well, boys. We did not lose anything by hanging back it seems. I'm ready. What do you want me to do?"

"There was no chance for those fellows from the first," said George. "They were a hard lot. I'd rather have gone with the Huns than with them."

"What became of Mr. Fitzgerald?" asked Miss Blyburn. "I saw him crowding with the rest, but I didn't see him when the boat pushed off."

"He may be among the dead up there," replied George. "I saw him pull a revolver and fire. The fellow was so absolutely frightened that he had no sort of idea what he was doing."

At the same moment a dismal cry was heard in the direction of the cabin.

"Oh, save me! Save me! Don't go and leave me to die!"

"Fitz, as true as I live!" cried Miss Blyburn.

And sure enough it was. Mr. Herbert Fitzgerald, with his clothes all ripped and torn and his face besmeared with blood, came staggering toward them, the picture of terror and despair.

"Wonder how he came to be left behind?" said Miss Blyburn, turning her head away to avoid the sight of one of the Hungarians who had been shot dead and now lay stretched out upon the deck.

"I expect he was knocked out and became unconscious," replied George. "You see what he is. 'Tisn't likely he would have kept still so long any other way."

"There's no hope for us, I judge," said Miss Blyburn, coolly.

"None whatever so far as the steamer is concerned," replied George. "You see when the captain abandoned the wheel the engine had probably stopped, although I can't say I noticed it stopping. The wind drove her head on against the rocks with just force enough to wedge her in. If the engine had been going I suppose the whole bottom would have been ripped out of her and we would have sunk long ago."

"Mr. Brandon, may I say a word?" asked Miss Blyburn.

"Why, certainly, but I'm just George, not mister. I'm only a boy."

"Indeed, you are more of a man than anyone else I have struck on this steamer, always excepting Mr. Brown."

"Harry, if you please," said that individual. "Look here, Miss Blyburn, we are only a couple of 'Frisko boys, who took a run up to Alaska for the house we work for, Doubleday & Downer, the salmon canners, down in Front street. Maybe you know them?"

"No, I don't, boys, but listen to me. If you are only boys I am only a girl. I am only nineteen. It is not likely that I shall be saved, but you may be. I am a reporter working on the Morning Call. I have just made a run to the Klondike and back again in the interest of my paper. Here is my manuscript all written up. I want you to take it to the Call and tell them I died in the harness. That's all; put it in your pocket, George, and don't say a word. Now, I am ready to do anything you say."

"And what am I to do?" asked a dismal voice behind them, and there was Mr. Fitzgerald again, rather calmer in his manner, but still very much scared.

"I'm blest if I know and I was going to say I didn't care," replied George. "I have my own opinion about such fellows as you."

"Don't be harsh with him, George," said Miss Blyburn. "Two minutes may settle our fate."

"He's no good and I know it. Look! Look! See the wave! Isn't it a monster? I was thinking about a raft, but you see for yourself how hopeless it all is," said George.

"Look out! It's going to douse us!" shouted Harry. "Catch hold of something. Quick. Look out for yourself, Fitzzy, or you'll be swept away!"

George threw his arm about Miss Blyburn and clutched one of the davits, Harry seizing the other, but the dull dude did not seem to comprehend.

"Sir, I allow no man to address me as Fitzzy," he exclaimed, bristling up. "You are beneath me or I should challenge you. I'd tweak your nose for you if it was not for the presence of the lady; yes, I would."

"Oh, go drown yourself," sneered Harry, and all in an instant his advice came near being followed, for the monster wave broke over the Sea Lion, deluging her decks and almost sweeping all off their feet.

The Hon. Fitz met with just this fate. He had neglected to provide for the emergency and before he knew where he was at his feet were swept against the rail.

"There comes another," shouted Harry.

"We are lost," gasped George; "that one will fix us."

And, indeed, it looked so. A wall of water fully fifty feet high came rushing toward the wreck.

CHAPTER III.—What Kind of a House is This?

But as luck would have it the wave broke before it reached them and the full force of the mighty swell lifted the steamer out of its trap high above the half sunken rocks and hurled it toward the cliff. It was an awful moment. Death seemed very near. But it was not to be. If the

wind had been blowing straight in the direction of the rocky wall that would have helped and, no doubt, finished the job. But it was not. It blew slightly off the direct line and it blew the steamer with it. The first thing George and Harry knew they went sliding around the point of the bluff and then whirling on into a little bay, striking hard upon the sand and lodging there, the wave on its retreat leaving them high above the water line.

"Hooray! Saved!" shouted George. "This way, Miss Blyburn. We may only have a moment, but that's enough to give us back our lives."

The ship's ladder was over the side, near the davits, and as George hurried Miss Blyburn toward it a dripping form rose at his feet and made a rush to head him off. It was the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald.

"None of that," cried George. "You will be saved, but ladies first. Now, then, Miss Blyburn, before the next wave comes."

The brave little woman climbed down the ladder and sprang to the beach.

Harry next," cried George.

"Go on yourself. The wave is coming," objected Harry.

"Go!" said George so sternly that Harry had nothing for it but to obey.

"Now, then, Fitzzy," added George, coolly, "the way is clear for the dude."

The Hon. Fitz did not stand on the order of his going, but simply went, hustling down the ladder. George followed hastily, but he was too late to avoid a drenching and ten seconds later his fate would have been sealed, for another wave broke upon the beach, passing clear over the steamer, and carrying the wreck back in the bay. But George had already jumped, and, landing in water knee deep, he fought bravely against the fearful undertow and found himself safe at last.

"Where are we, anyhow?" asked Harry. "On the mainland of British Columbia or on an island? Does anybody know?"

"I'm sure I don't," said Edna, "but I do know that all this will make a splendid story. Every move made is going to pay me."

It was going to pay George and Harry, too, if they had only known it, but of this we shall have occasion to speak later on.

"The rocks seem to set a long way in here," said Harry. "I can't see any trace of them looking in a straight line."

"And that's the way we have got to go," replied George. "What we want is to find a place of shelter and driftwood to build a fire. Let us hurry on. I'm afraid this is only an uninhabited island, but we will hope for the best."

"If I may be allowed to speak without running the risk of being kicked, I would like to call your attention to that light on ahead there," said the Hon. Fitz, suddenly.

"Where?" demanded George.

Fitz pointed.

"You have sharp eyes, Fitzzy," said George. "That's a light all right and it has a hopeful look."

"Can it be a house?" asked Edna.

"More like it's a fire in front of some Indian lodge."

"Heavens! We shall all be scalped! Fitzzy, this won't do for you."

"Say, I'll forgive you all if you will only stop

calling me Fitzzy," said the dude. "I'm in the same boat with the rest of you. Might as well be civil to a fellow! Now, come!"

"We'll get up to the light and think about it," said Harry, and they hurried on through the snow.

A moment later and the light flared up with great brilliancy. This was on account of the rocky wall on their right, which had partially obscured it. Passing around a turn in this wall brought it into full view and the boys burst out with a cry of surprise.

"Great Scott, what a long house!" exclaimed George. "What can it mean?"

There, right in front of them, stood a low, one-story structure, built of logs and at least two hundred feet in length.

"It must be a fish cannery," said Edna.

"Indeed it isn't," replied George. "No fish cannery here. I know every one on the coast."

The light was shining through the dozen or more windows, but not a soul was visible around the house.

"It's some Indian arrangement, you may rely upon it," said George, "but here goes to find out. Follow me."

He walked boldly toward the door, so closely followed by the others that they entered the long, narrow structure immediately after him.

An exclamation of astonishment burst from all the party as they looked around. The walls of the long house on both sides, as far as they could see, were lined with human skulls, so closely packed together that one could scarcely have put his fingers between them. In the middle of the earth floor a great fire of logs blazed.

"Look out!" exclaimed George. "There's some one beyond the fire!"

Two figures had suddenly risen up behind the blazing logs. They were Indians clothed in bear skins and blankets, men of great age both of them. Their faces were hideously wrinkled and their hair hung down over their shoulders in long white locks.

"Ugh! Ugh! No pale face come here!" cried one as both stood staring at Edna and the boys.

CHAPTER IV.—The Discovery in Blizzard Bay.

"Come away! Come away, out of this dreadful place!" whispered the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald. "My good gracious! Those Indians will kill us all."

"Rats!" exclaimed George. "Don't you fret, Fitzzy! Those men are both regular old fossils. Let me talk to them. I'll soon make them friends."

Thus saying, George started toward the fire with his hands outstretched. The two old Indians, who seemed to be the guardians of the House of Skulls, stared at him, but did not speak again. As he drew still nearer they suddenly dropped down behind the fire and disappeared.

"Look out, George!" cried Harry. "They are up to some game, sure!"

"Yes; do be careful, George!" called Edna. "Take no chances with those men!"

George would have rather they had held their

tongues, for he did not want to frighten the Indians.

This seemed to have occurred already. He, however, passed boldly around the fire, fully expecting to see the Indians crouching behind; but they were not there, nor could he see them anywhere in the long room.

"Hello! They've slipped out!" shouted George. "Come on, Harry! Come on, Edna! You can come, too, Fitzzy—it's perfectly safe."

All hands now hurried up, and the next minutes were spent in hunting for the two old Indians all over the House of Skulls, but no trace of them could be found.

Of course the boys looked into each one of the rooms in their efforts to find the two Indians, but without discovering the least trace of them; still, this led to another discovery of the highest importance in their present situation. In one of the rooms was a great quantity of furs, buffalo robes, bear skins, deer skins and the skins of the fox, marten, mink, beaver and other small fur-bearing animals. These skins had been all carefully dried, and the boys recognized their great value at a glance.

"Why, there's thousands of dollars worth of furs here!" cried Harry.

"We must count them up later," said Edna. "I must make notes of all this. It will make a splendid story for the Morning Call."

"I say!" cried the Hon. Fitz. "Am I in on the deal? Of course we shall carry these furs away with us when we go. I think I ought to have my share."

"There's one thing—they will make splendid beds!" cried George; "and I am going to take off my wet clothes and wrap myself up in one of the bear skins."

"Do, George!" said Edna. "It may save you from pneumonia. Harry, you and Fitz fix up the fire. I'll keep a lookout for the Indians and be ready for them in case they come."

No one knew until then that Edna carried a revolver. She now produced a handsome Smith Wesson and began patrolling up and down the House of Skulls. Fitz was willing enough to work, and he and Harry soon had the fire blazing brightly. A few moments later George appeared wrapped in a huge grizzly bear skin and carrying his half frozen clothes in his hand. These he spread before the fire, and Fitz and Harry brought other skins and threw them down on the ground. They made splendid sleeping rugs, and upon them the party passed the night. George and Harry took turns in watching, but no alarm came. Edna slept pretty well once she got asleep, and as for the Hon. Fitz, he not only slept, but snored loudly. Morning dawned clear and cool. Leaving Edna and Fitz still asleep by the fire, George and Harry hurried out to have a look at things as soon as daylight began to appear. The sea was rolling up on the beach, and now that the tide was up the water extended within a hundred feet of the house. Back in shore the land was high, and beyond, far to the east, a chain of lofty mountains, all covered with snow, was seen. There was comparatively little snow between the beach and the house. The high wind of the night before seemed to have blown it all away.

"Well! Well! This is a great place of busi-

ness. To think that we should have been wrecked here!" exclaimed Harry. "What do you think of it all, George?"

"Well, for one thing I think there is no doubt about our being on an island," replied George. "For another, I think we are likely to stay here for some time, for we must be far out of the regular course of travel."

"By Jove! That's not a very pleasant prospect, old man."

"A good deal better than if we had fought our way into that boat."

"Oh, of course! That goes without saying. I'm not kicking, either, and I don't want you to think so. Only what are we to do for something to eat?"

"There's the Pacific Ocean, and there's plenty of fish in it."

"Yes; but a fellow can't live on fish forever."

"Oh, something else will turn up. There's the woods behind the house. We shall be able to shoot something there. I'm not going to worry."

"Speaking of the house, what a queer place it is, George. If a fellow was any way superstitious he would not care to be there long."

"Do you know," said George, "that I'm surprised Fitzzy didn't kick about it."

"Never said a word, did he? Say, he may turn out to be a decent sort fellow after all. What do you think of the house, anyway? I never knew that Indians built houses like that."

"If you had read up the early history of this country you would have known it then. That's what called an Indian 'Long House, or Trival House. In old time there were lots of them scattered along this coast, and then whole tribes lived under the roof."

"But how about the skulls?"

"Well, I have my own idea about those. Don't know whether I'm correct or not, though."

"What is it?"

"Why, all these Indians on the Pacific coast are divided up into big families or totems as they are called. These are named after animals and birds and fishes and other things. For instance, there is the totem of the bear, of the wolf, of the whale, or the crow, or any other old thing, and I have no doubt that the family who once occupied that Long House belonged to the totem of the head, or the skull."

"Sounds reasonable. The house does not look as though it had been occupied in a good while, though."

"Don't believe it has; yet the fact that we saw those two Indians by the fire shows that it has not been abandoned altogether. Say, it's a splendid chance for a bath. Let's get around behind those rocks and take a tumble in the surf!"

This seemed to be just about the proper scheme, and the boys were soon swimming in the little bay. George was a splendid long-distance swimmer; in fact had quite a record in a modest way, and the temptation to exercise his powers now was too much for him. He soon distanced Harry and struck out boldly for the bluff which marked the entrance of the bay. Harry shouted to him to come back, but George only waved his hand in answer. In a few moments he had passed around the bluff out of sight. Harry turned back, feeling somewhat troubled. Before he could reach the beach he heard George's voice shouting:

"Hello, Ha! Hello! A big discovery! Put on your clothes and fetch mine! Come out on the bluff, old man!"

CHAPTER V.—About the Indians Who Vanished In the House of Skulls.

Harry lost no time in obeying. He could not imagine what George had found, but he knew that it must be something important by the way he spoke. He accordingly hurried on his clothes and, taking George's, which were now dry, ran along the beach and climbed the bluff. As soon as he got on top he knew what George's excitement was about. There lay the wreck of the Sea Lion in shallow water at the head of a larger bay. The steamer was all listed over to one side, and looked to be in bad shape. George was dancing about on the deck, and he waved his hand to Harry as he came in view.

"All right now, Hall!" he shouted. "We have got all the ship's stores to draw from. No danger of our going hungry, or dry either. Come out here and fetch my clothes."

This necessitated Harry taking off his shoes and stockings again. Rolling up his trousers, he waded through the shallow water to the wreck and joined George on the deck of the steamer.

"It's a big find," declared George, as he began dressing. Not only does it serve our present purpose, but there ought to be salvage money, if the steamer can be got off."

"Do you think that is possible?"

"Well, I'm no judge; but I know I'm hungry, and when I go back to the House of Skulls I propose to go loaded down with grub."

After the boys were dressed they ran all over the steamer. There was but a small cargo on board; three thousand cases of salmon formed the bulk of it, besides which were several bales of seal skins and other furs. But the steward's pantry was well stocked with provisions, and on the salmon alone the party could support life for a long time. So that all tears on that score were at an end.

The boys got two big baskets out of the steward's room and loaded them with a good supply of eatables and then returned to the House of Skulls. As they drew near Edna came hurrying out to meet them, and George lost no time in telling her the good news.

"That's fine!" exclaimed Edna. "So the blizzard blew the Sea Lion into the bay, did it. Well, we shall have to name that place Blizzard Bay, I suppose. But where is Mr. Fitzgerald? Did you leave him on the steamer?"

"Why, he wasn't with us," replied Harry. "We left him asleep on the bear skin beside the fire."

"He was not there when I woke up," replied Edna. "Probably he has gone into the woods."

"Oh, he'll turn up all right," said Harry. "Let's have breakfast. I've got coffee here and a coffee pot and two loaves of bread and a lot of butter and a leg of roast lamb, and George has got a whole lot of other things."

"I'm with you, there," laughed Edna. "I don't think I ever wanted my breakfast so badly in my life."

"Shall we go into the house to eat it?" asked George.

"Indeed we won't!" declared Edna. "The very sight of all those skulls makes me sick. Let's sit right down on the rocks here by the beach and have a regular picnic. One thing I'm glad of, my valise is on the steamer, and now I shall have a change of clothes."

"Yes; and we've got a trunk there somewhere and a whole lot of mining tools," replied George.

"How did you get the mining tools?" asked Edna. "I thought you went up to Alaska on salmon business?"

"So we did. This was a consignment of mining tools that our people sent to Juneau to the firm of Bennett & Burns. They failed about six months ago. My orders were to sell the tools if I could get a fair price for them, and to bring them back if I couldn't. Nobody would give half their value, so back they came."

"A piece of folly," said Edna, in her sprightly way. "Just wait till the Klondike mines become better known, and then you will see shiploads of mining tools sent to Alaska."

How true this prediction proved everybody knows now, but at the time of which we write there was but little belief in the Klondike mines. It was real fun having breakfast on the rocks. The boys built a fire and made coffee and a tablecloth was spread over a big flat stone and breakfast served. The Hon. Fitz did not put in an appearance, however, and George began to feel decidedly worried about him.

"I'm afraid something has happened," he said again and again. "That fellow is altogether too big a coward to go up into those woods alone."

"Perhaps we had better start out to look for him," said Edna.

"That's just what I think. As soon as I am through breakfast I am going to do it, too."

"I haven't the least doubt that he would give us the shake if he could," declared Harry. "If anything had happened in the Long House Edna would have known."

"It would seem so," added Edna; "and certainly nothing disturbed my sleep, but—oh, look there! Up at the house! There he is now!"

It was certainly the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald. He stood in the open doorway of the House of Skulls looking down at the boys, but never spoke a word.

"Fitz! Fitz!! Come down and get some breakfast!" shouted George.

Fitz seemed inclined to accept the invitation, for he started out of the house on the run. Then a very singular thing happened. Before the young man had advanced a dozen yards he suddenly halted and tumbled over backward, his legs at the same time flying up in the air and his feet kicking violently. Then while in that position the Hon. Fitz went skimming over the ground on his back and shot head foremost through the door and was gone.

"My!" cried Edna. "What is the meaning of that?"

"Indians He was lassoed" shouted Harry.

"That's it! I saw the lasso come down over his head!" echoed George. "There they are! There they are!"

Sure enough there were half a dozen Indians crowding in the doorway of the Long House, peering out.

"It's all up with Fitz unless we help him!" cried George. "His skull is booked to go up on the walls like the rest."

"You've got your revolvers — what are you waiting for, boys?" cried Edna.

"You must stay behind," said George. "It's on your account that we are holding back. You must not go up there."

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Edna. "As though I hadn't got my revolver! Just as though I wasn't as good a man as either one of you! Come on!"

All three started on the run. Just what the boys had feared had happened, and, determined that Edna should not expose herself, George and Harry shot ahead and gained the door somewhat in advance of the plucky girl. Meanwhile the Indians drew back inside and vanished.

"Look out, George! We'll get a shot, first thing you know," said Harry, warningly.

But the warning proved to be entirely unnecessary. There was no sound inside the queer building. George hesitated an instant and then ran in.

"Why, there isn't any one here!" he exclaimed.

This was a rather hasty decision since there were a hundred places to hide in the long room. But the examination which followed proved that George was quite correct. The Indians had completely vanished from the House of Skulls.

CHAPTER VI.—The Canoe That Came Into the Bay.

Here was a mystery which none of the little party could fathom, but it put a very serious aspect upon the disappearance of the Hon. Fitz. Twice over they searched the Long House, but always with the same result.

"There must be some secret way of getting in and out of here," declared George. "One thing is certain, we mustn't put in another night in the House of Skulls."

"What's the matter with those tents?" said Harry. "We might set up a couple of them at the head of Blizzard Bay."

Edna inquired what he meant, and Harry explained that among the mining tools were a dozen or more tents, all ready for use, and only requiring to be put in place. After some further discussion about the mystery all three went over the hills and down upon the shore of Blizzard Bay.

"We'll fix up the tents and get such provisions as we need ashore," said George, "and then we'll get back to the other bay and watch from behind the rocks for a while. We may see something more of the Indians. They can't have vanished into thin air and taken Fitz with them—that is sure."

Once more the boys did the wading act and made several trips between the wreck of the Sea Lion and the head of Blizzard Bay. Each time they came back loaded with various things which seemed likely to be useful to them in the present emergency. The tents were brought off first, and then Harry brought over a mattress and a supply of blankets. Later it was Edna's grip, and later still the trunk which the boys used in common. On the last trip George brought off a pick and spade and a good axe.

"There!" he exclaimed as he walked out of the shallow water to the place where Edna stood. "I should think this ought to do for the present. After we have taken another look for Fitz we will see about getting more provisions off. Harry is bringing a load of bread and cold cooked meat now."

"Yes," called Harry from the water, "and I don't see what you wanted to bother with that pick and shovel for. It's about the last thing we are likely to need, under the circumstances."

"Why, I don't agree with you at all," declared Edna. "When we set up the tents don't we want to dig a little drain around them? That's the way they do it in the Klondike. If you don't and it comes up and rain we will be deluged. Here, I'll show you how it is done."

Full of energy, as usual, Edna seized the spade and making out the line of her drain on the beach sand began to dig. She threw up a few shovelful of the sand and then the spade struck against something hard.

"Bother! There's a stone! I suppose I've turned over the edge of my spade!" cried Edna. "No, I haven't, either. Hello! What's this?"

She stooped down and pulled out of the sand a coarse, reddish-yellow looking mass, being irregular in shape, and held it up for George and Harry to look at.

"A nugget!" cried George. "A nugget of gold, as sure as you live!"

"Look out there! Look out there!" shouted Harry in the same breath.

He pointed out upon Blizzard Bay and George and Edna saw a long canoe with a high prow carved into the shape of a hideous head come shooting around the end of the bluff. It was filled with Indians; there were at least twenty of them, all paddling vigorously.

"Better hide while there is time, I guess. What a shame! Just as you made that big discovery. What do you suppose that nugget is worth?"

"Why, from what I saw in the Klondike country, I would say it was worth at least \$10,000," replied Edna. "There! They see us! No, they don't, either; or, if they do, they are not paying any attention to us. They are turning the canoe toward the wreck."

"We had better get down behind these rocks," said George. "We can't do anything against them, so the best thing is to keep out of the way."

They crouched down behind the rocks and waited; but things did not turn out exactly as they expected. When the big canoe had almost reached the wreck the tall Indian who stood in the bow, and who seemed to be the leader, suddenly uttered a wild shout and waved his hand in the direction of the shore.

"Hello!" cried Harry. "They have changed their minds—they are coming this way!"

It was a fact. For whatever unknown reason that might have caused the change, the big canoe suddenly altered its course and made a bee line for the beach. All saw that to remain where they were would be little short of madness.

"We must run for it or fight for it, one of the two," exclaimed George.

"We'll run first and fight afterward!" declared Edna.

They sprang up and started back up the beach on the run. A fearful yell went up from the

long canoe then, and a shower of arrows flew after Edna and the boys.

CHAPTER VII.—The Sea! The Sea! The Everlasting Sea!

"Are we going to run away and abandon all our things, like a trio of cowards, Hal, or do we make a stand against them?" exclaimed George Brandon when they had run a short distance up the beach.

"That's what I say!" Edna spoke up. "We want those things—they are absolutely necessary to us."

"Twenty against three is big odds," replied Harry. "Still, I'll do anything you say."

The trouble was Edna would not leave them, and the boys were afraid for her sake. It was no use talking to the brave girl, either. Edna wanted to do her share of roughing it like a man.

"We will stop here behind these rocks and give them a round anyhow," she declared.

"Look out! Here come the arrows again!" exclaimed George.

They had just time to drop down behind the rocks when a shower of arrows came whistling over their heads, doing no damage, but showing clearly the unfriendly spirit of the savages. George looked for serious trouble. He felt that some show of resistance ought to be made at the start just to let the Indians understand that they could not have everything their own way. So he threw up the rifle and fired three shots. A chorus of horrible yells broke from the Indians and another shower of arrows was the result. What the final result of it all might have been it is hard to say, for at that moment an unforeseen occurrence altered the whole affair. The wind had been steadily rising for some little time, and as the tide was on the rise also and the wind blowing off the water, the rollers on the beach were getting bigger and bigger all the time. All at once Edna spied a huge one sweeping into the bay.

"Look! Look!" she cried. "It will swamp them sure!"

And that is just what it did. On came the wave, a perfect wall of water. George declared afterward that there must have been a slight earthquake, and that this was the accompanying tidal wave; but, be that as it may, the canoe was thrown high in the air when the wave struck it and immediately swamped. The wave broke upon the beach with a noise like thunder, the water running almost up to the rocks behind which our little party lay concealed.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry. "They'll all be drowned!"

For a moment or two it looked very much that way. But the Indians all proved themselves splendid swimmers. One after another came bobbing up to the surface and the canoe was speedily righted. The accident seemed to have aroused the superstitious fears of the Indians, for they all got back into the canoe as quickly as possible and hastily turned around and paddled off out of the bay and were seen no more. It was an immense relief to know that they were gone. The boys and Edna climbed to the top of the headland and could see them paddling away down

the coast. Not only were they gone, but it was evident that they did not mean to come back again. For some time this seemed too good to be true, and the shipwrecked party from the Sea Lion remained watching them until the canoe had disappeared.

"They are going to give us a rest for a while, anyhow," said George. "We must improve the opportunity. First question is where are we going to sleep tonight? In the House of Skulls again?"

"I say no!" declared Edna, positively. "I've had quite enough of that dreary place. Let's build ourselves some sort of a shelter at the head of Blizzard Bay."

This was promptly agreed to. The boys had come to admire Edna's way of doing business so thoroughly that they were ready to consent to anything she might ask. It was not a difficult task, either. Among the things brought ashore from the wreck of the Sea Lion were two stout axes. George and Harry went into the woods back of the beach and cut down a number of small hemlocks. Then selecting a favorable site, they drove into the ground two crotched poles and laid a third across resting in the crotches. Against these they placed hemlock boughs on each side, leaving a space for the door. It made a capital shelter from the wind, and to a certain extent from the rain.

"There's your house, Edna," declared George. "Now we will build a bigger one for Harry and myself."

By the time this was finished it was time for dinner, and Edna, who had lighted a fire on the beach, had it ready prepared. As there were plenty of supplies to draw from, the dinner proved a very good one. After it was over all hands strolled up to the House of Skulls to see if anything could be seen of Fitzgerald, but the gloomy long house was quite deserted and the mystery of his strange disappearance remained unsolved.

"Let's put in the afternoon digging on the beach there where we found the nugget," suggested Harry. "We may find more gold."

"Not today!" said Edna, decidedly. "I'm in for that tomorrow, but not today."

"I know what you are driving at," replied George. "You want to climb the mountain and see what sort of place we have struck—isn't that it?"

"That's just what it is," replied Edna. "We really ought to know whether it is an island or whether it is the mainland."

"There's no better way of finding out than to get up to that big rock up there," said George; "so let's come ahead."

Preparations for the climb were soon made, and, George leading the way, the party struck in through the woods to the foot of the mountain, and after a good lot of hard climbing they managed to reach the rock. It was not quite at the top of the mountain, but it was pretty near it and a fine view was to be had on three sides. It was water in whichever direction they looked.

"I guess we are on an island all right," said George; "but we can't decide the question till we get to the top."

"Well, I'm not going to try for it," panted Edna, and she seated herself on the rocks. "I've had just as much of this climbing as I want, but

I wish you boys would push ahead at the top and leave me."

"No," replied Harry, positively; "we will not leave you alone."

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Edna. "What harm is going to come to me? Go on, boys, I want to be left. I insist on it. I'll run away and leave you if you don't."

"Come on, Hal," said George. "Edna must have her way if the heavens fall!"

George, seeing that Edna was determined, dragged Harry away and they pushed on to the top of the mountain.

"It's an island!" gasped Harry, his breath all gone.

And so it was. On all sides the water stretched away from the rocky shores.

"The sea! The sea! The everlasting sea!" cried George. "We have got to make the best of it. Here we are and until some steamer comes along and rescues us here we are likely to stay."

CHAPTER VIII.—Panning.

The boys did not remain long on the mountain top, but before they started down to rejoin Edna, whom they could see sitting quietly on the rock, they discovered several things of interest. First, on the other side of the mountain the descent was almost perpendicular, and, as it looked to them, entirely impassable. Here the mountain ended in huge cliffs, against which the water came dashing with fearful force.

"We won't go down there," said Harry; "but look over this side, George. The House of Skulls is not located a bit as I thought it was. It is right on the edge of a precipice, don't you see?"

George looked down upon the mysterious building and at once perceived that Harry was right. Behind the House of Skulls rocks rose. The boys had not climbed upon them, and now they could see that these rocks formed the edge of a precipice at least a hundred feet in depth reaching down to a long, narrow valley which stretched far back into the interior of the island. Beyond the valley another hill or mountain rose. It was not nearly so high as the one they now stood upon, so they could look right over it, and beyond that again was the sea. The boys now descended and rejoined Edna.

"Well, we are on an island!" exclaimed George as they came out upon the rock.

"I thought so," said Edna. "Look down there, boys. Plenty of chance for our friend Fitz to vanish. Of course there is some secret passage under the House of Skulls, and he has been taken down into the valley there—no doubt about that."

"Looks so," replied George. "There has got to be some exploring done sooner or later."

"Now," said Edna. "There must be no gold digging till we have done what we can toward Fitzgerald's rescue. I don't like the man, I confess; but it won't do to leave him in the hands of a parcel of Indians."

"If he is still alive," said George.

"If he is still alive, of course. That's the idea, and we want to know that, too."

The return to the headland was the next move. It was easier work going down the mountain than coming up, and they were soon at the shel-

ters again. Nothing would suit Edna but they must go up to the House of Skulls and have a look down into the valley.

"It will be easy enough to climb those rocks," she said. "I expect to see a whole Indian camp down there in the valley."

They pushed through the thick growth of bushes which surrounded the long house on three sides and soon came out at the rocks. George gave a grunt of disgust.

"Say, Harry! we shall want a balloon to get up here," he exclaimed.

"Perhaps it's not so steep further along," suggested Edna. "We are not through with it yet."

But they might just as well have given it up then. The rocks were not over twenty feet high, but they rose in one perpendicular wall as smooth as glass.

"Oh, for a ladder, or a balloon, or an elevator!" exclaimed Edna. "We can't do a thing without one of them. Boys, we have got to give it up."

They had followed this strange natural wall for fully half a mile on the left, and here it turned and joined the mountain. There was absolutely no chance to get upon it at this end. At the other it was even worse, for the rocks grew higher and ended in a precipitous point which stretched far out into the ocean. Thus they found themselves cut off on all sides.

"Wait till tomorrow, when the sea is not running so high, and I'll swim out and see if I can't get around that head," said George. "I'm sure I can do it, but I don't feel like trying it now."

"Settled!" replied Edna. "I'll not urge you any more, boys. We have done all we can here, so let's get back and study the gold question a little bit since there seems to be plenty of time."

Now this happened to be a question that George had studied before while in Alaska, for, although he had stuck pretty closely to his salmon business, he had still found time to look into placer mining. It was a subject that interested him greatly, for at that time George had had a very serious notion of giving up business and going off to the Klondike. All this Harry knew well enough, and when he explained it to Edna she at once declared that George was unanimously elected boss of the new mining camp on Blizzard Bay.

"Well, then, if that is the case, let's go to work systematically," said George, "just as though we expected to remain here and do business forever. First thing is to wash the sand itself. Harry, you fetch a couple of those big tin pans we brought from the steamer and we will see if we can get a color right here on the beach."

Taking one of the pans when Harry came back, George scooped up several double handfuls of sand, threw them in the pan and then filled it up with water and began shaking it vigorously.

"Is that what you call panning?" asked Edna.

"It's one way to pan," replied George. "Rather a rough one, I must admit; but still it may give us a color, and that's what we want."

He now began to pour the water slowly off. The lighter particles of sand he allowed to go with it. If there was any gold present, being heavier than the sand, it was bound to settle in the bottom of the pan. Harry and Edna watched the operation with close attention.

"See any, George?" demanded Harry.

"Sure."

"I don't!"

"The light is in your eyes. Look crossways over the sand!"

"I see it!" cried Edna.

"Hooray So do I!" shouted Harry; "half of what is left in the pan is gold!"

CHAPTER IX.—The Head That Came Out of the Fire.

While there was no such amount of gold in the pan as Harry's enthusiasm led him to believe, there was still a good showing. George washed the sand a second time, disposing of nearly all of it. What was left was a small collection of fine yellow dust weighing about an ounce. It was not the coarse, flaky gold and small nuggets which are found in the Klondike country, but still it was gold, and the way George reasoned was that if one pan taken at random from the beach would yield an ounce, the chances were altogether in favor of a richer find below. Edna and Harry now went to panning on their own account, and George tried another. The result was much the same in all three pans. It was nothing wonderful, but the gold certainly seemed to be very evenly distributed through the sand. By the time the sun had set about a hundred dollars' worth of dust had been collected, which was certainly a pretty good return for a few hours' work.

"I call off!" exclaimed Edna at last. "I've got to look after the supper, boys, and anyhow there has been enough done for the day. There's gold here wherever we have a mind to look for it. We know that now."

"Yes; and we shall know more about it tomorrow!" declared George. "We've made a big strike I have no doubt. If we ever do escape from this island and can claim the land here, it may make us all rich."

"It will make a splendid story for the Call anyhow," said Edna. "Just you wait till you see me work up a boom on Blizzard Bay."

Another visit was paid to the House of Skulls after supper, but nothing was found to be in any way changed. About nine o'clock our little party settled down for the night. It had been arranged that Edna should sleep the night through and the boys divide the watch between them, George taking first turn. So Edna retired to her shelter, and, putting a branch up before the door, disappeared. Harry just flung himself down upon a pile of hemlock boughs in the larger shelter and was soon fast asleep, leaving George to pace up and down the beach, rifle in hand, ready for any emergency that might come. It was dull work, and nobody who has not tried it need blame George for soon getting tired of his lonely watch. Each time he walked toward the hill which separated Blizzard Bay from the next cove, where they had landed, George went a little further, and after four or five times he determined to push on around the hill altogether and take a look at the House of Skulls, which, let it be understood, could not be seen from Blizzard Bay. He had no sooner come in sight of the long house than he saw that the return of night had brought a change. A bright light shone through the windows. Tongues of flame could be seen leaping up inside.

"There's some one there!" exclaimed George. "Now is the time to solve the mystery if I only dared to leave Harry and Edna alone."

He determined to wake Harry and ask him to stand guard while he went to investigate the condition of affairs at the long house, but when he tried this he found it was not such an easy task. Harry was a tremendously heavy sleeper at all times. He was in a deep sleep now, and, although George shook him again and again, he could not even get a grunt out of him. George went out of the shelter and looked off on the bay. The moon was shining brightly and he could see a long way out to sea; but there was nothing to be seen of the Indians.

"I'll risk it," he thought, for his curiosity was fully aroused. "I'll take no chances, but I must and will get a look inside that house."

He hurried around the hill and started up the rise on which stood the House of Skulls. Not a sound reached his ears as he drew near except the crackling of the fire, which George knew must be on the ground in front of the big stone which he had named "the altar." Peering in through the open door when he reached it, he saw that he was right. A number of logs had been heaped up in front of the stone and were blazing away at a great rate; but there was no one to be seen near it, and not a sound was to be heard inside the house except the crackling of the burning wood. George, after a little hesitation, ventured in and had a good look around. Surely there was no one in the House of Skulls but himself.

"I suppose I ought to go back," he thought; "but I'm going to hold on a minute anyhow. Somebody built that fire and—hello! What was that?"

A loud thump sounded near the big stone altar. George's heart gave a thump, too. The pile of bearskins lay on the floor at no great distance away, and he hastily crawled under it, pulling a big bearskin over his head and shoulders.

"If anything happens to Harry and Edna, I'll never forgive myself," he thought. "I know I ought not to do it, but here I am and—hello! Here she comes!"

A queer grating sound was heard near the altar. Breathlessly listening, George peered out from under the bearskin, his eyes growing big with amazement at what he saw. Suddenly a head with two immense ears appeared behind the fire. It was a hideous head, half man, half beast, with two great, staring eyes, looking directly at the pile of bearskins beneath which the boy lay concealed.

CHAPTER X.—Strange Doings in the House of Skulls.

George no sooner got a good square look at the strange head which had risen up behind the fire than he knew what it all meant. The Indians on the northwest coast of America, from British Columbia to Alaska, are all pretty much alike in one particular. They love outlandish ceremonies, and make strange carvings in wood representing grotesque and hideous heads. Others take the form of huge wooden masks with great projecting tongues and huge staring eyes. Sometimes these masks are further adorned by having the horns of cows or elks attached to them, and this was

the case with the one George was looking at now. The hideous vision behind the fire was simply an Indian with one of these masks over his face, and a pair of elk's horns on top. George lay perfectly still and watched. Something was going to happen he felt very sure. At all events, he could not get out of the House of Skulls now without attracting attention to himself, so he lay perfectly still and watched for what was to come next.

The mask moved slowly right and left, the big eyes peering about in every direction. Then suddenly an Indian dressed in a queer suit made of skins leaped up behind the fire, and, uttering a shrill whistle, began to execute a wild dance before the altar, whirling around and around in the most surprising fashion. It made George dizzy to look at him. He wished he was out of the long house and back at his post again, but unless he wanted to expose himself it was too late to make a move now. So he continued to watch the whirling figure behind the fire. There was a strange fascination about it. Somehow or other George could not take his eyes away. Suddenly another figure appeared dancing with the first. They were as much alike as two peas. Where the second figure came from George could not tell, for he did not see it come. First thing he knew there it was, and that was all. The wild dance continued.

Round and round the figures whirled with fearful velocity. Then the same thing was repeated. Suddenly there were three, all exactly alike—all dancing in the same wild fashion. Then it was four, five, six, and so on, until at last twenty of these strangely masked forms were whirling about behind the fire. George was witnessing a sight which probably no white man had ever seen before. It was one of the ceremonial dances of these Indians, who for reasons best known to themselves chose to keep hidden. But George did not at all appreciate the blessing thus bestowed upon him. He fully expected to see the masked Indians make a rush for the skins any moment, and drag him out. He heartily wished himself back in camp again. After continuing the dance for about fifteen or twenty minutes, the masked figures suddenly came to a dead halt. Suddenly all threw up their hands and with one horrible yell each made a rush for the side of the building, and each seized a skull and tore it away from the wall.

George had labored under the delusion that the skulls were so firmly fastened to the walls that they could not be removed. Those which he had examined certainly were, but these could not have been, for the Indians pulled them away without the least difficulty, and now began tossing them up in the air and catching them as they came down in the most expert manner, singing and shouting as this strange game of ball went on. This continued for perhaps ten minutes. Then every Indian stamped fiercely on the floor of the hut and came to a halt. The skulls were now replaced against the wall, and one of the masks gave a shrill whistle. Something new was going to happen, and George watched breathlessly to see what it was. He had not long to wait. In a moment the head of the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald came into view behind the fire. It was Fitzzy with a bandage over his eyes and his hands tied behind him. One of the Indians beat down, and,

seizing hold of his hand, pulled him up into full view, the others silently watching.

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded Fitzy in a trembling voice. "Say, don't kill me. I—I'll work for you—I'll do whatever you say."

There was no answer. Fitz began to grope his way about. In whichever direction he moved he ran against an Indian. Suddenly one of the masks drew out a long stone knife and began flourishing it about in front of the face of the blind-folded man. The time had come to make a move.

"They are going to kill Fitzy, and add his skull to the rest of the collection—that's what they are up to," thought George.

He grasped his rifle, and had just made up his mind to spring up and stand for the rescue of Fitzgerald, no matter at what cost, when the question was decided for him in a hurry. Suddenly the Indian with the stone knife waved it three times in a circle about Fitzy's head, and every mask made a rush for the pile of furs, each seizing hold of the first skin he could lay hands on.

"I'm in for it now!" thought George, and so he was all in a moment, for one of the Indians pulled away the bearskin which covered him before he had time to get on his feet.

CHAPTER XI.—Big Nugget No. 2.

Probably George Brandon would have seen his finish then if he had not been spry. He flung up his rifle and blazed away over the heads of the masked dancers, yelling at the top of his lungs all the while. The effect was altogether surprising. The Indians never made the least attempt to lay hands on him, but flocked back to the fire and began to drop out of sight rapidly.

"Run, Fitz! Run straight ahead!" shouted George.

Fitz paddled toward the door. Without attempting to change his position George continued to blaze away over the heads of the Indians. They were rapidly disappearing. In a moment they were all gone. The fire had now died down a good deal. It was getting rather dusky in the House of Skulls. Strain his eyes as much as he would, George could not exactly make out what became of the Indians. They seemed to just sink down behind the fire and disappear. As the last one vanished George ran forward, and, getting in front of the fire, tried to find out what it all meant. He could see nothing, however. The dirt floor seemed to be all solid and no break anywhere. Perhaps if he had been more particular in his examination George might have made some discovery, but he was too anxious about Fitz, so he ran out of the hut shouting:

"Fitz! Fitz! Hold up there, wherever you are! They're all gone now!"

It was well that George gave Fitz the call when he did, for the dude had sprinted away toward the beach, and as he had not the faintest idea where he was going, he would have found himself in the water in a minute more. George came up now, and in a moment the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald was a free man once more. He was terribly "rattled" though. All he would say at first was:

"Don't let them get me, George Brandon! Don't let them get me! Don't let them drag me down into that hole again!"

"Now, you keep cool," replied George. "You're all right, Fitzy. Come along with me to camp. Never mind telling me about it now. Wait till you have cooled down a bit."

Fitz followed on meekly enough. As they walked on toward Blizzard Bay George looked back toward the House of Skulls again and again, but not the first sign of an Indian could he see, but when he turned the end of the hill and looked toward the shelters, who should he see but Harry and Edna hurrying toward them.

"There he is!" cried Harry. "Fitzy, too, by gracious! Hooray! Say, George, where did you find him? Where on earth have you been?"

"Well, I'm fairly caught, I see," replied George. "I deserted my post and went up to the House of Skulls. Of course I deserve to be shot, but I've got Fitzy just the same."

"Yes, he saved my life," said the Hon. Herbert. "There's no doubt about that, and I'm most awfully obliged to you, George Brandon, but please, please don't call me Fitzy. Now, there's a good fellow! Don't."

They walked on, Edna explaining how she had suddenly waked up and come out to see how things were going. Not finding George, she had become alarmed, and aroused Harry, and both started off to look for him. When George came up with them they were on their way to the House of Skulls. Of course the next thing in order was to find out what Fitzy had to tell. His story was rather a disappointment, however. It appeared that Fitz had been captured while asleep, as near as he could make out, for when he awoke he found himself a prisoner in a cave with his hands and feet tied. After a good deal of hard work he managed to break the bark ropes which held him down, and, prowling about in the dark, he found a bowl full of what he took to be water. He drank some of this, and immediately fell down and soon became unconscious.

"I was dead drunk in a minute," declared Fitz, "and upon my word I'm not over it yet. My head is all muddled. I am blindfolded and being led upstairs, and then George hollered and told me to run."

"What!" cried Harry. "Don't you remember coming to the door of the House of Skulls yesterday morning and calling to us? Don't you remember being lassoed there?"

Fitz positively declared that he remembered nothing at all about it, and he seemed so sleepy and dull that George sent him inside the shelter to sleep it out, which he did with a vengeance, for it was noon next day before he awoke. Meanwhile the boys and Edna had accomplished a lot. George never went to sleep at all. He declared that he just couldn't sleep, and the remainder of the night was spent in front of the tent talking over the strange return of Fitzy, and the work they proposed to do next day. First thing after breakfast all three went up to the House of Skulls and made a careful examination of the earth floor in front of the altar, but not a trace of a break was to be found. George declared that if it had not been for Fitz, he would be half inclined to think that what he had seen was all a dream, but

there was Fitz snoring away in the shelter when they returned.

"We'll solve the mystery yet," said Edna, "but let it drop now. We want to get to work on the gold."

The pick and shovel brigade now started in for business. George marked out a space six feet by four at the head of the beach, choosing a spot that looked as likely as any other, and they went to work to run down a prospecting shaft a few feet to see what could be struck. Edna took right hold and worked with the boys. She would do it, and there was no use in trying to persuade her not to. Two buckets had been brought out from the steamer with the other things, and while Harry plied the pick, loosening up the earth, George filled the buckets and passed them up to Edna, who emptied them and passed them back again. In this way the work proceeded rapidly, but by ten o'clock, although the boys managed to get the shaft down about four feet, there was no sign of color in the sand.

"I guess we will have to give it up here and strike in somewhere else," said George, discouraged. "There doesn't seem to be the slightest show."

"Who says there isn't?" shouted Harry at the same moment. "No show! Then what do you call this?"

He struck his pick deep into the earth and turned up a queer shaped, brownish yellow mass.

"Another nugget!" screamed Edna from the ground above.

And so it was! George made a dive for it, and held up a nugget twice as big as the one they had found on the beach.

"It weighs ten pounds if it weighs an ounce!" he exclaimed, "and it's almost solid gold!"

CHAPTER XII.—The Stone That Came Over the Rocks.

The finding of big nugget No. 2 was only the forerunner of other finds. Of course there was no further talk of abandoning the prospect hole. On the contrary, work was pressed forward more vigorously than before. Between ten and eleven two other finds were made. Both were nuggets, one was even larger than No. 2, but the other was a little smaller than No. 1. After eleven and on to twelve nothing was discovered, although our boy miners worked very steadily. Edna had given it up now and was busy preparing dinner. The shaft was down about six feet, and it was necessary to stoop down and reach for the bucket. This made hard work, and the boys insisted that she give it up. George positively refused to fill the bucket again unless she did. After Edna went away George used both pick and shovel and Harry took his place on the ground and worked the bucket.

"How far down do you think we shall have to go to strike into the regular gold deposit?" she asked when George finally gave it up and climbed out of the hole.

"Oh, it is impossible to say," replied George. "In the Klondike country, as you very likely knew, they have to go down from eighteen to twenty-two feet. It might be the same here, or

it might be more or less. I'm sure I can't tell."

"Hadh't we better shake out a few panfuls of this stuff and see how she runs?"

"We might, I suppose. Still if there is any gold in there it runs so fine that I don't believe we could save much of it by panning. No harm in trying, though."

They did try, but nothing especial came of it. About half an ounce of very fine gold was left in the pan.

"The sand is rich. That would be considered more than a color," declared George. "If we could put this stuff through the amalgam process I don't doubt that it would pay."

Of course Harry wanted to know what the amalgam process was, and George explained that it consisted of treating the sand with quicksilver. He was still talking about it when Edna came and called dinner, and the boys went down to the beach to wash up. Edna had spread the cloth on a big flat rock which had served them for a table before, and they were just beginning to eat when Fitz walked out of the shelter looking very much dazed.

"Hello, Fitz!" called George. "How are you feeling? Come and have some dinner. You must be as hungry as a bear."

"I am hungry," replied Fitz. "I don't know that I was ever so hungry in all my life. May I—may I join you?"

"Why, of course! We expect you to join us," replied George, kindly. "Come and sit right down. You'll feel better after you get some grub into your stomach. Do you remember any more about that business than you did last night?"

"What business?" asked Fitz, seating himself and attacking the crackers and cheese and canned salmon ravenously.

And here was the beginning of another surprise. To the astonishment of all Fitz remembered even less than the night before. He had not the faintest idea how he came to go to sleep in the shelter. He could not remember what had taken place in the House of Skulls.

"It's no use. I just can't do it, boys," he declared. "I suppose it is all just as you say, but upon my word the last thing I recollect is drinking out of the bowl in the cave."

But in spite of his lapse of memory Fitz declared that he felt perfectly well; he was most curious to know all that had happened in the House of Skulls, and he would have gone on talking about it the remainder of the afternoon if Edna had not interfered.

"Come, come!" she exclaimed. "It is no use going over and over the same ground. I tell you what we'll do, boys; we'll quit mining for the afternoon, build a ladder and climb up on top of those rocks. I'm most curious to know what is to be seen on the other side."

"That suit me," said George. "We'll do it."

"What's this about mining? Is there a mine here?" Fitz asked.

This gave the boys another job of explaining. Fitz inspected the nugget and grew enthusiastic. He wanted to know all about it, and the boys left him examining the shaft when they went up into the woods to begin on the ladder. It took about an hour to build it. Hammers and nails had been brought off from the Sea Lion, and, with the axe, nothing else was needed. When com-

pleted the ladder was strong if not artistic, and with it the whole party started for the House of Skulls.

Here everything was just the same. It was hard to believe that the silence of the dreary place had ever been disturbed. Carrying the ladder around behind it, George and Harry placed it against the rock. George climbed up, and, grasping the edge of the rock pulled himself up.

A startled exclamation escaped him.

"What is it? What do you see?" cried Edna.

Harry was already climbing the ladder, when all at once, before George had time to reply, a stone came whizzing over the wall.

It struck George squarely on the head. With a sharp cry of pain, he pitched forward and disappeared over the edge of the rocks.

CHAPTER XIII.—How Harry Jumped Over the Cliff.

Evidently George Brandon had managed to get himself into serious trouble by the simple act of ascending the ladder and looking over the rocks.

"To the rescue!" cried Edna. "All this is going to make a first-rate story, but we don't want to lose George! Get up there, Harry! Get up on the wall!"

Harry was doing his best. Truth told he felt mighty ticklish about it, too. Gaining the top of the wall, he could see far down into the valley below. He was able now to look right into the Indian village. It was a big one and there were many people running about here and there. None of them seemed to be looking up or paying the least attention to what was going on at the top of the precipice which ended in the wall of rocks where Harry stood.

"See George?" Edna called out.

"No, I don't! He has fallen down here and there is no help for him. Oh, what shall we do?"

"We won't give it up till we have to, that's one sure thing," said Edna, very decidedly.

She scrambled upon the wall, leaving Fitz at the foot of the ladder, staring stupidly.

"I've had my dose of it, and I don't want another," he called out. "I'm going to stay here."

"Coward!" cried Edna. "George saved you from their clutches, and now you wouldn't raise a finger to help him."

"Oh, now come, if you are going to talk to me that way, I won't stay here at all!" cried Fitz, highly offended, and he actually walked off without even inquiring if Harry had seen anything of George on the other side of the wall. But, as we have said, Harry could see nothing of his friend. The precipice was not very steep—certainly not perpendicular, but it looked entirely too steep to climb down.

"It's a terrible thing," said Edna. "George must have gone to the bottom, and yet I don't believe he has."

"Nor I," replied Harry, briefly, letting his eyes roam in every direction over the side of the hill.

"What a crowd of Indians there is down there," continued Edna. "They don't seem to be paying the least attention to us. They would if they had seen him fall."

"Yes, and how about the stone?" replied Har-

ry. "Could they throw it up here? Never! It is more of the mystery of this place. George never went down that hill."

It seemed the merest folly to make this assertion, yet something seemed to tell Harry that he was right. Suddenly the Indians in the village at the bottom of the valley caught sight of them and a wild shout went up. The bucks were looking up, the children pointing. Women came running out of the lodges and the attention of every one was turned toward the two figures standing there on the rocks a good three hundred feet above their heads.

"We can't stop here!" cried Harry. "Look, Edna! look! They are going to shoot!"

Fifty bows and more were drawn then and a shower of arrows came flying up at the top of the precipice. Harry saw at once that they were running no risk in remaining where they were. There was quite a wind blowing and the arrows were turned from their course long before they reached the top of the precipice.

Still, there seemed to be no use in staying where they were, and Harry told Edna to get back down the ladder.

"We can't do any good here," he said. "Let's go back and get time to think."

They hurried down the ladder and stood looking at each other for a moment in silence.

"What are you going to do?" asked Edna. "If you don't make some move, Harry, I will."

"I was thinking about a rope," replied Harry. "It may seem a crazy scheme to you, but if I could get down there in front of those rocks a few feet I believe I could find out something about George."

"Just what I was thinking myself. The rocks project so much a little way down there that we can't get a good view. I believe George was caught by somebody, and that that somebody is the one who threw the stone."

"We'll try it anyway. Where's that fellow Fitz?"

"Gone off mad."

"The fool! Let him go! I shall have to go to camp after the rope myself, I suppose."

"No. I'll go, Harry," said Edna. "Get up there again and lie down. Keep a watch!" You may find out something. I won't be gone a minute longer than I can help."

Edna started off on the run and Harry climbed the ladder once more. He had scarcely set foot on the wall when a stone came flying past his head. Harry saw it coming and dodged.

"Ah, you wretch! I see you!" he cried. "Here goes; it's hit or miss!"

Then Harry did as brave a deed as was ever performed by any boy. Conditions had altered under the wall in the brief moment of his absence. Directly beneath him not ten feet down was now a narrow platform made of fir tree trunks, upon which stood an old Indian with a hideously ugly face looking up at the boy. It was he who had thrown the stone, and he was just about to throw another when Harry jumped down upon him. He landed right alongside the Indian, who instantly made a rush at him. But Harry was too quick for the fellow. Hauling off, he dealt him a stinging blow between the eyes, sending the old man reeling back into a cave which opened in under the rocks.

He did not give Harry a chance to repeat the blow. With a sharp cry he took to his heels and ran back into the cave, nearly stumbling over George, who lay there stretched upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIV.—Gold Goes Booming in Blizzard Bay.

"Let him go, Hal! Let him go! Don't try to follow!" George called out as Harry rushed into the cave.

There was a bad cut on his forehead and his legs and arms were tied with strips of walrus hide, but there was nothing worse to report than a bruise when Harry whipped out his knife and cut George free.

"Are there any more of them?" Harry asked. "Oh, George, this is a big relief! I thought you were a goner, sure!"

"Why, look here," replied George; "it's a wonder that I'm not. Would have been, too, if it wasn't for this queer contrivance here."

George referred to the platform, which was a movable affair, supported by two fir trunks, one on either side, running in grooves cut in the rock. It could be pushed out beyond the line of the cliff, and just as easily drawn back again. The idea of it seemed to be to enable the Indian and his friends to reach the cave from the top of the rocks.

"It was a close call," said Harry, when he got his breath. "George, I thought you were a goner, sure."

"Thought so myself," replied George. "When I got that stone on the head it knocked me silly, and the next thing I knew that old fellow was on top of me. You put a scare into him, though. He don't seem in a hurry to come back. Where is Edna? How are we going to get out of here? First thing we know there will be a gang of Indians up out of that hole. I suppose you saw what there is down there?"

"I guess I've seen everything," said Harry. "Edna has gone after a rope, but I think we can get up without it. Hold on a second till I see if that fellow is laying for us. I don't want to get a stone on the back of the head."

He ran back into the cave, George following him. They could see nobody. After a dozen feet or so the opening under the rocks seemed to narrow down to a mere slit, just about wide enough for a man to pass through, and to descend abruptly.

"No use going any further," said Harry. "Let's get back."

They returned to the movable platform. Harry, by climbing upon George's shoulders, was able to grasp the top of the ledge and pull himself up, and then, lying flat and reaching down, he caught both of George's hands and with a big effort drew him up on top of the rocks. It was all over now and no harm done, except the slight cut on George's head. They descended the ladder and hurried toward Blizzard Bay, meeting Edna just beyond the House of Skulls.

"Well, don't you go and do anything like that again, George Brandon," she said, after she had heard the story. "Now I want to make a rule, and it must be obeyed. As long as these Indians

don't interfere with us we must not interfere with them. Let's stick to Blizzard Bay and our mining and give the House of Skulls a wide berth."

It had come to be that Edna's will was law in the little camp on Blizzard Bay, and during the two weeks which followed this last adventure at the House of Skulls this rule was strictly carried out. It worked well, too. Nothing whatever was seen or heard of the Indians. It looked as if they were content to leave the inhabitants of Blizzard Bay alone so long as they kept away from the House of Skulls. But they knew that their enemies were near them. On several nights lights were seen in the long house, and twice the strains of wild music were heard there, lasting from midnight until away long toward morning, but never a sign of an Indian was seen. Meanwhile mining boomed.

A big discovery had been made on Blizzard Bay. The shaft was run down twenty-three feet by the end of the week. Fitz did his share of the work so grudgingly and was so fearfully lazy about it that at last the boys declined to avail themselves of his services any longer, and Edna took his place when she could spare the time from the cooking. After that Fitz turned hunter and fisherman, and with a good shotgun taken from the steamer sauntered about the mountain and along the shore, almost always bringing back game of some sort.

There were always ducks, and occasionally a wild goose; twice it was deer, and once Fitz came into camp triumphantly dragging after him a small bear, upon which they feasted for several days. The first Sunday was kept strictly a day of rest so far as work on the mine was concerned. In the afternoon all hands climbed the mountain and had a good look around. Down in the Indian village everything seemed to be going on as usual. Far in the distance George spied the black smoke of a steamer, and he ran up a red silk handkerchief on the end of a pole and kept it waving for some time. It is doubtful if the signal was ever seen, but at all events the steamer passed out of sight.

Monday morning bright and early work on the shaft began again, and this proved to be the red letter day for in less than an hour George struck into a mass of small nuggets closely packed together in true Klondyke style, and all that day and the next and the next still the boys worked like beavers getting them out. There was a good deal of sand mixed with them, and it required careful panning to make the separation perfect. Sunday came again and the strike had been all harvested. Now there was not much more than a color to be obtained in the bottom of the shaft. Had it paid? Well, just listen. George found a grocer's scale in the galley of the Sea Lion and every ounce of the gold had been carefully weighed out. Here is the result: \$85,543 to the credit of the boy miners of Blizzard Bay.

CHAPTER XV.—Fitz Shows His True Colors at Last.

"It's going to rain," remarked Fitz when he came out of the shelter on Monday morning, something after nine o'clock.

"Well, what about it?" asked George, who was

busy clearing away the dirt at the dump around the mouth of the shaft.

"I shan't be able to bag any game to-day, dear boy. Of course I can't run the risk of getting wet."

"Certainly not. You might take cold. I'll tell you what you can do, though, just for a change."

"No; I don't want to," said Fitz, turning away.

"Of course not," said Edna, coming along with a pail on her way to get water from the spring. "Fitz would rather take a wetting any time than to pitch in and do his share of work."

"Oh, come now, you're real hard on me, Edna," drawled the dude. "I'm willing to work, only George won't let me."

"I don't want to be bothered with you," said George, who had taken the pail from Edna's hand. "Get this full, so that I can keep on here."

"Why certainly I will," said Fitz, shamed into decency for once. "You don't have to tell me, George Brandon. I was just going to do it anyhow."

"Ready with the bucket!" called Harry from down in the shaft.

"What you struck?" shouted George.

"There's a lot of nuggets here in the side of the shaft. Seems to be a kind of spur of what we were working in last week."

"Good enough! Let's have a sample of them. If we can duplicate our strike of last week it will make us all rich."

"All right! I believe we can do it. Do we get the bucket or don't we? By thunder, you will be astonished at what I have got to put in it this time, George."

"Coming! Coming!" cried George, who was fussing over the rope, which had become kinked at the rude windlass which was now in place over the shaft.

"It's more than my water is, then," said Edna. "The pot has got to boil, nuggets or no nuggets. Where is that lazy Fitz?"

Edna was not one of the kind to stand waiting, so she started for the spring around on the other side of a ledge of rocks which projected out into the bay.

"Strange! what kinked this rope so," exclaimed George. "I'm sure I left it all straight last night. It's almost enough to make one believe that some one has been fooling with it."

"Do you think so?" replied Harry, from the bottom of the shaft. "Do you know that I'm dead sure that some one has been fooling around down here since we quit work Saturday night?"

"No!"

"Well, now, I am. There has been digging done on this side, and I'll bet on it. I didn't like to say a word before, because——"

"Because I was on guard the first half of the night," broke in George. "Well, I'll have to make a confession. I suppose I did fall asleep."

"I thought so," said Harry. "There has been somebody here. This is serious. Have you looked to see if the boodle is all right?"

Now the "boodle" as the boys jokingly called the gold they had dug, which already amounted to the large sum of nearly a hundred thousand dollars, had been carefully buried each evening in a hole dug for the purpose lying between the shelter occupied by Edna and the one in which Harry and George slept.

"I haven't looked, but I will," replied George. "Here goes the bucket, Hal!"

"Let her come! Take a look at the treasury just for form's sake and see if everything is all right."

Harry received the bucket and began to fill it, and was still at work when all at once he saw George looking down at him as pale as death.

"Hal," he said quietly, "there's trouble."

"What! Not gone?"

"Every ounce of it, and all my fault. Great heavens! what can I say? What shall I do?"

Before Harry had time to answer a piercing scream rang out down in the direction of the spring.

"Edna! More trouble!" cried George, and Harry sprang to the ladder and was out of the hole in an instant.

"What's up? What was that?" he called, running after George, who had already seized his rifle and was darting off in the direction of the shore.

"It's Edna! Come on!" he shouted. "Oh, Hal! There it goes again!"

"George! George! Save me!" came the cry, and the last of it seemed to be smothered, as though some one had clapped a hand over Edna's mouth.

In a few seconds Harry had overtaken George. In a moment more they went bounding around the rocks in full sight of Blizzard Bay. Two boats filled with men were pulling away from the shore. In the foremost were Edna and Fitz. The girl was evidently a prisoner, for two of the men held her and Edna was struggling all she knew. Suddenly one of them pushed her down into the boat, and at the same instant Fitz, who was sitting calmly in the stern, turned and shouted back to the boys:

"Tra-la-la, Georgie! Good-by, Hal! See you later, after you've dug up some more gold!"

"The traitor!" gasped Harry. "Oh, George, what does all this mean?"

Instead of answering, George flung up his rifle and fired straight at the boat.

"So, so!" shouted Fitz. "You will, will you? Let 'em have it, boys."

Without a word four of the men in the rear boat, rough-looking fellows all of them, swung around, threw up rifles and sent a regular fusillade shoreward. The boys saw it coming and ducked just in time to save themselves, the bullets whistling over their heads. By the time they recovered themselves the boats were well under way. It was useless to fire, and George realized it.

"Fitz, you traitor! Look out for me!" he shouted. "My time will come yet!"

Fitz turned, and pulling off his hat waved it derisively as the boat shot around the point and was lost to view.

CHAPTER XVI.—Hunting for Edna.

It was a hard blow which had now struck our boy miners at Blizzard Bay, but a blow of another sort was already gathering seaward which threatened to add to their troubles; in other words the most severe storm which had ever broken over the desolate island was now close at hand. The boys realized something of this even in the excitement which followed the disappearance of the

boats, for the wind was already blowing strongly toward the shore, throwing up great whirls of spray with every wave that broke.

And these moments were moments of agony. To have lost the gold would have been bad enough but to think of Edna in the hands of a gang of the toughs which are ever moving up and down the far northwest coast, ostensibly gold prospectors, but actually cut-throats, pirates or anything else in the criminal line that circumstances may call for, was terrible indeed. So as George and Harry ran over the rocks trying to catch another view of the boat neither spoke a word, but the determined look on the faces of both might well have made the "Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald" fear for his own safety if he could have seen his companions of the wreck. At last the boys gained the end of the point which marked the entrance to Blizzard Bay on the left.

Here they had a full view of the ocean and here the boats certainly should have been visible if they had put out to sea.

"Not in sight, George," said Harry, after they had stood a few moments holding on to their hats and straining their eyes off toward the horizon.

"No."

"They have kept in shore. Probably they came off of some schooner or small steamer, which is hiding around here somewhere."

"You're right. I have no doubt that's so. Oh, Hal, what a terrible thing I have done! I ought to be shot or kicked off these cliffs into the sea."

"Hold on, now, don't distress yourself so much about it, old man," replied Harry, kindly. "I have my own ideas about the whole matter. I believe that fellow Fitz has played us for a couple of suckers from the first."

"So do I. He's a fake and a fraud. I'll bet he knows the Indians: I'm certain his story about being drugged in the House of Skulls was all a lie."

"My idea precisely," said Harry, "but I go further than that; I believe he drugged us all last night. It was he who made the coffee and we all drank it just before Edna and I turned in. My head was as heavy as lead and when you came to call me after midnight it just did seem as if I could never wake."

"Do you really think so?" asked George, looking immensely relieved. As for me, I can't tell you how I came to fall asleep. I only know that I found myself lying on the ground near the shelter. Don't remember lying down even; was never more surprised in my life than when I found myself there."

Five minutes passed. Still the boys stood looking off on the sea.

"There's one thing, Edna is good for any of them," said George. "'Tisn't as though she was one of your weak ones. What a story she will have to make out of all this for the Morning Call after—hello! I see something at last! Look there, Hal! Look there!"

"Smoke!"

"Yes."

"A steamer!"

"That's what I think. It's hiding in some bay or cove further along the shore."

"Of course it has been there for several days. Fitz's hunting expeditions were only a blind. He simply went to meet these fellows. They were

waiting for us to get through with that strike and as soon as it was done they went for the gold."

"And now we will go for Fitz," said George, setting his teeth. "Don't know what we shall do when we strike that gang, but I bet you that infernal dude will wish he had never been born."

It was a relief to have something to do even if it was only following that thin thread of smoke which, far in the distance, could be seen, rising about the high projecting masses of rocks that everywhere lined the shore of the island. It looked as though it was going to be an easy matter to cross over the rocks and reach the place, but the boys knew very well that it was not so. They had made several trips along the shore. Nothing could be rougher. It was a series of high, rocky bluffs, with deep indentations between and little or no beach anywhere. In order to make any progress you either had to walk back to the head of these indentations, or bays, or to climb down over the cliffs and cross through the water. At low tide many of these crossings could be accomplished by wading and it was dead low water now, so every moment was precious if the boys expected to make any headway in their search. Three of the bays were thus crossed; each time there was a difficult and dangerous climb down and up the cliff. Coming out on the bluff after the third crossing the smoke seemed to be so near that George declared that the next bay would probably show them the steamer.

"I hope so," replied Harry, rather dismally. "There's going to be more trouble, though, I'm afraid."

It was not necessary for George to ask him what he meant. The sky had now all clouded over and the gale had increased to such an extent that they could scarcely keep their feet. As yet the rain had not come, but it seemed close upon them and when it did come, unless all signs failed, it was sure to be a fearful storm. The boys hurried on along the bluff for fully half a mile. The smoke seemed to retreat before them and there was not a sign of a break to be seen anywhere.

They had now passed far beyond any point which they had visited before, so it was all new ground and there was no telling what they might strike.

"There you are!" cried George at last. "I see the end. The bay is right ahead of us now."

"Then the steamer is in the next one," replied Harry. "It's fully half a mile away from us yet."

And Harry was quite right. When they reached the edge of the cliffs and looked down into the break they saw that they had struck a more serious obstacle than anything encountered yet. It was a broad bay which lay below them. The strip of water was several hundred yards across and seemed to be pretty deep. At the head of the bay was a white, sandy beach, upon which the waves were breaking with fearful force, and this was a mile distant at least. George's heart sank, for he realized that it would take the best part of an hour to cross this bay and to come back on the other side to the point on the bluffs opposite to where they were now.

"Shall we swim it, Hal?" he asked. "It will take forever to go up to the head of the bay and back again."

"I'm good for it if you are. Anyhow the tide is running in and there isn't much danger of our being washed out to sea."

"Then we will try it, providing we can get down the rocks here."

It was a tough climb. Part of the way they simply had to sit down and slide. George saw that they could never hope to get back again and he felt very doubtful if they were going to be able to climb up on the other side once they got across.

"Look out for yourself, Hal," he called, for Harry was ahead. "Can you see whether there is any beach there or not?"

"No, I can. Can't get a view down there at all."

"We ought to know, though, before we go much further. Where in the world are you going to land unless—look out for yourself, Hal! Don't lean over so far!"

Too late came the warning. Hal had already leaned too far over the ledge upon which he was standing. He toppled forward and disappeared like lightning, striking the water below with a loud splash.

CHAPTER XVII.—From One Peril to Another.

"Are you all right?" yelled George, terribly startled by this sudden mishap.

"Right as the mail!" came the answer. "Such a find down here, George! Look out for yourself or you will come down same way I did and you don't want that."

"What is it? What have you struck?" called George, as he climbed down over the rocks, not daring to lean over to find out where Harry was.

"A canoe! I've had my bath. No swimming needed here."

"Good enough. A war canoe, as true as I'm a sinner. See any Indians about, old man?"

"No, I don't. They can't be far away, though. Hurry up, George. This is our game. We can round the next point easy enough now."

George lost no time in getting down to the flat rock, against which the canoe lay fastened by means of a rude hide hawser to a sharp upright stone. It was really a tremendous affair, being fully sixty feet long and four feet wide. It seems to have been hollowed out of one enormous tree-trunk and at the bow rose a great wooden post, carved all over with grotesque heads in the style common to the Indians of the Northwest coast.

"Jump in, George!" cried Harry; "there are plenty of paddlers here. The Indians must have gone back among the hills somewhere. It's a shame to rob them, but we've got to use the luck that comes to us. That's right. Mind how you step or you will turn the old thing over. Now, then, cast off. Confound it, what's become of the wind?"

It was a curious change which had suddenly come over the storm. All at once the wind seemed to die away and then, before the boys had fairly seated themselves in the canoe and thrown out their paddles it shifted several points and came sweeping down through the deep canyon with a mighty rush which sent the canoe flying seaward with fearful velocity.

"A blizzard! A blizzard!" gasped George, for following on the wind came a whirl of snow in

big flakes so thick that the boys were almost blinded. All in a moment the whole atmosphere was full of it and they could see nothing three feet away from them. Such a thing as stopping the canoe was just as impossible as to try to fly. They could only go with it in whichever direction the wind chose to carry them along.

"We must try to land," yelled George. "We are lost if we get outside the bay in this blow."

"What's that you say? I can't hear you?" Harry yelled back.

Before George could try it again a wild cry, as if from many voices, was borne toward them from behind on the wind.

"The canoe! The canoe! Where's the canoe?"

"Adrift! She's gone adrift!"

"Then we are lost!"

"Here they come!"

"Look out!"

"Fire!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! All this was heard and then a horrible yelling and the crack of rifles rose above the storm. But not a thing could be seen back in the direction of the sounds but the wild whirl of snowflakes getting thicker and thicker every instant. The yells grew louder; the voices which had spoken could now only be heard in one confused cry and the cracking of the rifles continued until all at once the sounds ceased entirely and there was nothing to be heard but the rushing of the wind.

"What do you suppose it is, George?" shouted Harry, getting his mouth close to George's ear.

"It's Fitz and his gang fighting with the Indians" yelled George; "that's my belief."

He had scarcely spoken when the last of the snow blew past them; the squall was over, but the wind blew harder even than before. Looking back, the boys perceived that they had rounded the point either on one side of the bay or the other without knowing it. The canoe was skimming past high, beeting cliffs, which projected far over the water; in fact, were hanging directly over the canoe.

"Great Scott! Suppose some of those rocks should come tumbling down upon us!" exclaimed George.

It was almost like a prophecy, for the words were no more than uttered when a noise like thunder was heard above them and a vast mass of the rock was seen to disengage itself from the ledge and come whirling down. Wildly working at their paddles the boys made a violent effort to get out from under. It was useless. The rock struck the stern of the canoe, tearing it to splinters, and dropped into the water with a force which sent up a whirl of spray twenty feet high, while the canoe itself instantly filled and sank out of sight.

CHAPTER XVIII.—At the Mercy of a Madman.

It was a lucky thing for the boys that both were perfect experts in the water. If it had been otherwise they would have seen their finish then. George jumped when he felt the canoe going under. Harry, half dazed by the suddenness of the accident, was not quick enough in disengaging himself from the wreck to avoid being pulled under, but he bobbed up serenely just as

same and was as ready to face the new danger almost as soon as George. We refer to the waves. They were "mountains high" as the saying is, and the rising tide was sending them dashing against the cliffs with fearful force. There was no chance to communicate with each other now; it was each one for himself and a big chance if either would ever escape this fearful peril.

Twice George was thrown back toward those terrible cliffs, but each time the wave broke a little short of the rocks. He had lost sight of Harry from the first and gave him up for dead. Springing out of the water at a moment when the retreating wave brought a lull, George could see that he was almost around the point and he made a desperate fight for it and got around altogether. His strength was almost gone now and it is very likely he would have given up entirely if he had not all at once caught sight of a small, low, rakish little steamer riding at anchor in a narrow bay and not ten feet around the point.

"The steamer at last!" he thought. "Well, it's life or death with me. I've got to get aboard there or pass in my checks!"

It was a question if he could do it. The steamer was straining her anchor chain fearfully, threatening to break away from her holding at any instant. There was no one to be seen on deck, but steam was up and the thick, black smoke of the soft coal showed George that at last, under these most unfavorable circumstances, he had reached the goal which he and Harry had struggled so hard to obtain.

"I've got to get aboard there if they kill me!" he thought. "I'm almost winded. There is just nothing else to do."

Throwing all his remaining strength into one vast effort he struck out boldly, and, coming up under the steamer's bows, managed to clutch the anchor chain. It parted almost instantly. Instead of the rigid chain which he had so desperately grasped, George found himself holding on to the dangling end, while the steamer, freed from its moorings, was moving rapidly seaward, impelled by the rushing wind. George was as good a climber as he was a swimmer, but he was so exhausted that it took a mighty effort to rouse himself to the effort, still any one watching the boy as he went over the side like a monkey would scarcely have imagined how he felt. Once on the deck, his strength deserted him and he fell down panting like a winded water dog. The steamer was well clear of the point by the time he got his breath. He then scrambled up and stared around. There was nobody in the pilot-house, no watch on deck, but he could hear a terrific yelling somewhere on board the strange craft. It was like the cry of a demon. It made George's blood fairly run cold to listen.

"That's a madman!" he thought. "It must be. Nothing else could holler like that."

He hurried aft, drawing his revolver as he went; the rifle, of course, had gone down with the canoe. He had scarcely advanced ten feet when, bounding up out of the cabin without a hat and all wet and dripping, came Harry.

"George!" he shouted. "Good heavens! Are you here? Look out! Look out! He's got a knife!"

Instantly the man came springing out of the companionway door after him. He was a big, powerful fellow, dressed only in shirt and trousers;

his black eyes gleamed wildly and his hair seemed to stand up all over his head.

"They are after me! They are after me!" he yelled, brandishing a long knife. "Where is the one who ran this way? I'll do him! Ah! There he is!"

He did not seem to see George, but as his eyes rested upon Harry he made a rush for him with the knife upraised.

"Delirium tremens!" gasped George, throwing himself in front of Harry.

"Back! Get back!" he shouted. "Go below!"

He did not raise the revolver, however. Somewhere he had read that any one suffering from delirium tremens and, indeed, mad people generally could almost always be influenced by the positive command of a will stronger than their own, and, great as the risk seemed to be, he determined to try it now. It worked like a charm. The man stopped yelling, stared at George and suddenly wheeling about, made a dive back into the companionway and disappeared.

"Phew!" gasped Harry, "that fellow has got them bad! Oh, George, what a queer twist affairs have taken! How did you ever get aboard here?"

"Same to you," replied George. "I swam for it and climbed up the anchor chain. Is anybody else aboard but that man?"

"Don't know. I did the same thing you did. I started down into the cabin to see if I could find—hark! Edna's voice! Great heavens, he has attacked her!"

Piercing screams were heard below in the cabin. Unmistakably it was Edna's voice calling for help.

"Fly, Hal! It's Edna! She is at the mercy of the madman!" cried George, and they made a rush for the cabin stairs.

CHAPTER XIX.—On Board the Rocket.

With Edna calling for help, as may well be imagined, it did not take George and Harry more than a few seconds to get into the cabin. The sight which met their gaze was enough to arouse them to the highest pitch of excitement. There was Edna kneeling on the cabin floor, with the mad sailor holding her by the hair. He clutched a long knife in his hand, which he kept flourishing around her throat. It was a thrilling moment. Realizing the man's condition, the boys did not dare to rush upon him and try to get possession of the knife, for fear that the mischief might be done all in an instant.

"Hello!" Shouted George. "Hello, friend! The captain wants you on deck."

The man stopped his motions with the knife and turned to see who had spoken, for his back was toward the boys.

"Who are you?" he asked in a hoarse voice. "Are you a couple of devils come to fetch me? Say, you know you're not real. You know I could walk right through you if I tried."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed George. "Say, you're smart; you are onto us. Come and try it. You can kill the girl afterward. You know she can't escape."

"Don't laugh at me, you fiends!" yelled the sailor, turning his rage toward George now, just as our hero intended he should do.

He let go of Edna's hair and made a rush for them.

"Let him go between us, Hal," whispered George. "Let him go between us. Just like enough he'll chase up on deck."

It was a happy thought, for it worked like a charm and brought matters to a crisis at once. As the madman came rushing toward them, the boys suddenly parted.

"Fiends! Fiends!" he yelled, and up the cabin stairs he went flying.

George ran to Edna, who he thought was fainting; Harry started after the fellow up the stairs.

"Come up, George. Bring Edna up!" shouted Harry. "He has thrown himself overboard and I guess he is drowned."

George and Edna got up on the deck without an instant's delay.

"There's where he went!" cried Harry, pointing to the starboard rail. "Just jumped right over and sank out of sight. Edna, are you hurt?"

"Not a bit," replied Edna. "I'm as sound in wind and limb as ever I was. Goodness, how it snows! Tell me all about it, boys, and then I'll tell you about myself and all about Fitzzy, which will surprise you—goodness me, what a splendid story it will make for the Morning Call—and then I'll tell you a secret which will please you. On second thought I'd better tell the secret first, and here it is. I know where those infernal pirates have hidden the gold and you may thank the madman for that, for it was he who gave the secret away."

"Good!" cried George. "Our story is soon told, Edna. We came to look for you and we found you, that's all. We have been blown away by a blizzard, we tumbled over cliffs, we stole a canoe and got smashed up by rocks tumbling on us, and finally wound up by swimming to this steamer and coming on board just in time to rescue you. There you have the whole thing in a nut-shell. Say, Hal, this boat is dragging her anchor; we are working out to sea."

"We can't do anything about it, though," said George. "Let her go for a little. We have got to keep watch. Later on we will see if we can't get steam up and make a move."

"As for my story," said Edna, "it is just as simple as yours. Fitz and his gang drugged me and carried me on board this steamer. You were drugged, too; maybe you don't know it, but you were."

"I suspected it," said George. "The gold——"

"Was stolen to the last ounce," interrupted Edna, "but I suppose you know that all right. Who do you suppose Fitzzy really is, boys? You would never guess. He told me himself. Do you know that impudent rascal actually wants me to marry him? The idea of such a thing! Well, who do you suppose he is?"

"I'm sure I can't imagine him to be anything else but what he seems," replied George.

"He's the notorious Captain Crowninshield!"

"What! The seal skin pirate?"

"That's him. For the last two years he and his gang have been holding up the sealers and helping themselves to the results of their catch. He has been written up in the Call twice. You know the United States steamer Bear has been out after him again and again and the Canadian authorities are after him, too, but the Rocket—

that's the name of this steamer, boys—always managed to show her pursuers a clean pair of heels. Strange that we should fall in with him; isn't it? Of course this island is the regular hang-out of the gang. Fitz admitted it and he told me that he has been in communication with them from the first. They were only waiting for us to dig enough gold to satisfy them and then they jumped on us—that's all."

"And the story about the Indians capturing him in the House of Skulls was all a lie?"

"Every word of it. When we thought he was drugged he was simply drunk. Oh, he's a coffee cooler. You wouldn't know the man if you could see him as I saw him on the deck of this steamer, and that's right."

"We are almost outside of the bay now," remarked Harry. "If the wind holds as it is it will take us back to Blizzard Bay, too."

"Yes, if it don't land us on the rocks," said Harry, "and that's what it's liable to do. I wish it would stop snowing; we might be able to do something then. Edna, where is the gold?"

"Come with me and I'll show it to you," replied Edna, and she opened the door of one of the staterooms.

"Hooray! It's all here!" cried Harry, for the bags of gold dust and nuggets were stacked up on the floor.

At the same instant the sharp report of several rifles was heard.

CHAPTER XX.—Captured by the Indians.

The boys and Edna hurried on deck to find that the situation had considerably changed. The snowstorm had ceased as suddenly as it had come and the sky was now clear, although the wind was blowing harder than ever.

The steamer had drifted clear of the bay and was just passing the mouth of the cove where George and Harry had found the canoe. The firing still continued; George and his companions hurried to the rail on the side toward the cove and there they saw two long canoes like the one they had taken lying off the rocks where they had seen the men.

The canoes were filled with Indians, who were firing at a number of white men who were trying to make their escape by running along the rocks, some of them every now and then turning back and firing rifles at the canoes.

"A fight!" cried George.

"And see! Fitz is leading the Indians!" Edna exclaimed. "It is a quarrel among the seal skin pirates. Fitz and half a dozen others have turned upon his own men."

It was more than a fight, as they presently became aware. Harry was the first to discover the true situation.

"They can't go much further!" he cried. "See! they are penned in. They can't get beyond that little point and they can't go back without running right into Fitz's crowd."

Edna pulled out her notebook and pencil and went to work as coolly as though it was all a most ordinary affair. Then they saw Fitz lead the charge. The canoe in which he sat was run ashore and the others immediately followed his example. Fitz led the Indians in a bold dash

upon the rocks and a fearful fight was on all in a moment. The watchers on board the Rocket saw several men go tumbling into the water, while the Indians seized hold of others and scalped them.

"There!" exclaimed Edna, shutting up her notebook. "I've got a fine sketch of it all. Good gracious, boys, I shall have stuff enough to keep me going for weeks if I ever get back to 'Frisco, and I'm not going to admit for a moment that I sha'n't do just that very thing."

"We had better be thinking about getting back to Blizzard Bay," said George.

"Take the wheel and see what you can do, George," said Edna. "Steer for Blizzard Bay and then we will make up our mind."

"But we are dragging anchor."

"Can't we get the anchor up? At least we can try."

They did try, but met with no success, for the anchor was entirely too much for their united strength, or perhaps they did not know how to handle it. While they were fussing over the anchor the steamer continued to drift on and was rapidly drawing near Blizzard Bay.

"I think I might turn her in," said George. "We might as well go there as anywhere else. If we can get the gold ashore and hide it before Fitz and his crowd come down on us that will be something accomplished. After that we will decide what to do next."

"I say yes," replied Harry. "George, will you take the wheel or shall I?"

Before George could reply there was a shock which nearly threw them all off their feet and the steamer listed away over to the port side.

"On a rock, by thunder!" cried George. "That settles it. We won't ever get to Blizzard Bay."

They had got themselves into serious trouble in more ways than one, as they found out a few moments later. The Rocket was hard and fast on the rocks and pounding terribly.

"There they come!" cried Edna. "We are in for it now!"

"Let's get out on the rocks!" exclaimed George. "We can make the shore with nothing worse than wet feet."

"Alas for the gold!" sighed Edna, "but I suppose it has got to be done. Just hold on a second, while I make a sketch of these canoes and then I am ready to go."

"Sketch nothing!" cried George. "If we are going we want to go now before they see us."

They hurried to the lower deck, where they had no difficulty in climbing out upon the ledges and by jumping from rock to rock they gained the shore.

It was just about the worst move they could have made. As they scrambled over the rocks toward the point a sharp whistle rang out from the direction of the canoes.

"Fitz sees us!" cried Edna.

"Look!" gasped George, stopping short. "That's not all!"

Harry gave an exclamation of dismay, for there, right ahead, standing motionless and covering them with rifles, were five Indians.

"Ugh! Ugh!" grunted one, who seemed to be the leader. "Come on. No be frightened. Come on to the House of Skulls."

CHAPTER XXI.—The Man Behind the Rock.

"Good gracious. We are in for it now!" cried Edna. "What in the world are we going to do?"

"Nothing at all. There's nothing to be done," replied George. "Look behind you, Edna. We have deliberately walked into a trap."

A dozen or more Indians were creeping up behind them over the rocks. Some were armed with rifles; all carried long knives in their belts. To have attempted to show fight would have been simply useless and could only have resulted fatally.

"It's a case of unconditional surrender," Edna remarked in her cool way, and she walked right up to the big buck who had done the talking and held out her hand.

"How are you, old man?" she exclaimed. "Come, shake and let's be friends. There is no use in quarrelling."

It was certainly a pretty good bluff, but it did not work. The Indian seized Edna roughly and dragged her on along the rocks, the plucky girl talking to him all the while, as though he was her dearest friend. George could not help her a bit, nor could Harry, for both were seized and their hands tied behind them. If it was really a whistle from the canoes that had given the Indians their order they did not seem disposed to wait for any further instructions from Fitz and his gang, for all three prisoners were hurried on with ceremony and they had advanced but a short distance when they passed into a cave opening in under the bluff.

They had not gone far when George made another discovery of considerable importance, which was nothing more or less than the interesting fact that the young buck who was leading him along was very drunk. He was so far gone, in fact, that he kept stumbling and had all he could do to keep his hold on George's arm. It was this same Indian who had done the tying for George's hands, too, and he did it so badly that before that had gone far George became aware that he could slip his hands out of the leather rope.

Should he do it? Would it be right to abandon Harry and Edna? George thought it over and came to the conclusion that his chance of helping them was a hundred per cent. better if he did than if he allowed himself to be dragged on to the House of Skulls, to which he had no doubt this underground passage through the bluffs would sooner or later lead them. Quietly he loosened his hands; then, turning suddenly upon the drunken Indian, he dealt him a knockout blow alongside the head which sent the fellow down upon the sandy floor of the cave like a log. He had chosen his chance well, for the other Indians had just passed out of sight around a projection in the rocky wall. For a moment George stood still waiting for results, for the move had been accomplished noiselessly and he did not want to alarm the Indians on ahead. There was no danger. The Indian never moved.

"Heavens! I hope I haven't killed him!" thought George.

He bent down over the man and soon discovered that he was breathing all right. It seemed to him that he had passed out of a state of momentary unconsciousness from the blow into a drunken

sleep, George instantly made the best of his discovery and took away the Indian's knife and a good revolver. There was no rifle to get, so having accomplished all he could he groped his way backward toward the mouth of the cave.

"I'm off overland for the House of Skulls," he determined. "Surely it must be better for Edna and Harry to have me free than a prisoner like themselves."

He had scarcely gained the entrance to the cave when he heard some one shout outside and a lot of loud talking followed, and he could hear Fitz's voice among the rest.

"They are all coming in here!" gasped George.

He looked around for a place to hide and soon spied a big boulder which had rolled down on the shore outside, a few steps beyond the entrance to the cave. George dropped on his hands and knees and looked out. It was just as he had supposed. The canoes were already alongside the stranded steamer and a number of the Indians were climbing aboard, while another party, half Indians and half whites, were coming along over the rocks, led by Fitz himself.

"Come on, boys!" Fitz was saying. "We want to hustle up to the House of Skulls and settle this business. Those two fellows must die—I can't be bothered with them. The girl is my prize, though; I mean to marry her and nobody must interfere."

"Oh, that's your plan, is it?" thought George. "Well, we will see about that."

He crept rapidly over the ledge and crawled in behind the boulder, when just as he started to rise a man suddenly sprang upon him from further around the rock.

"Hold on, there!" he hissed, covering George with a cocked revolver. "Stop where you are! You have come far enough!"

CHAPTER XXII.—Prisoners in the Indian Village.

While George Brandon was running into new difficulties and dangers Edna and Harry were still prisoners and in a fair way to learn something of the secrets of the House of Skulls. There was no chance of escape for them. While the Indians had probably all been indulging too freely in fire-water, they were by no means drunk, with the sole exception of the one put in charge of George, and they kept straight on through the cave, or rather the underground passage, until suddenly daylight loomed up ahead and they came out upon the side of the hill directly opposite the House of Skulls. There was no opportunity for Harry and Edna to exchange a word, for the Indians kept them well apart, hurrying them down the hill and then up on the other slope, until the long house was reached, where they entered and paused before the altar, all hands crowding into the room where the grinning skulls looked down upon them.

Here they paused and for a few moments stood around the altar in silence. What they were waiting for Harry could not guess, but the situation was soon explained by the entrance of an old Indian, whom Harry and Edna immediately recognized as one of the pair who had so strangely disappeared behind the altar on the night of their

first visit to the House of Skulls. Without speaking to any one, these two walked up to the altar, and, bending down, were seen to do something to a large, flat stone which lay apparently half embedded in the ground behind the altar itself. Then the secret was out in a moment, the stone swung down and hung suspended as though fixed upon two pivots, which, as a matter of fact, it was. Between the stone, as it then hung, and the altar there was plenty of room for a man to pass and there also was a flight of rude stone steps beneath leading down into the darkness under the House of Skulls.

"So this is the road we have got to travel now," thought Harry, and he was right.

The two old Indians, who were evidently medicine men or priests, led the way and the procession moved on down into the dark depths and all in solemn silence; the torches were lighted again and when they came to the bottom of the steps they entered a large cavern with lofty walls and roof all sparkling with stalactites; through this they passed for a considerable distance, always descending, until at length they came out into the long, narrow valley where lay the Indian village which they had seen from the top of the mountain and again from the wall.

A great crowd of squaws and papooses came out to meet the party and now the silence was broken and the clatter of tongues all speaking the guttural language of these Indians was deafening. The prisoners were marched to a large hut and turned loose inside, the door being closed behind them and two Indians remaining on guard outside.

"Well!" exclaimed Edna, now that they found a chance to speak to each other for the first time. "This is an interesting state of affairs, I must say. What in the world do you suppose they mean to do with us, Hal, and where's George?"

Here were two very natural questions, but they were also ones to which Harry had no answer and an hour passed before there was any break in the monotony of their confinement in the hut, which was so dirty that for a long time Edna positively refused to sit down, although fatigue brought her to it in the end. At last the door of the hut was thrown open and in walked the familiar figure of the Hon. Herbert Fitzgerald, looking much as when Harry had last seen him, with the same air of lazy indifference and the same drawl to his voice when he spoke.

"Aw, Harry, how are you, deah boy?" he said. "How do, Edna? So you wouldn't wait for me to come back on board the Rocket? Don't you think it wasn't altogether pleasant there for you, but still I would have made it pleasant for you if you had only said the word."

Edna looked at the speaker scornfully, but made no reply.

"Why don't you speak?" demanded Fitz, dropping his dudish manner all at once. "Are you both tongue-tied? Don't you want to know what I intend to do with you? Don't think that you are going to bluff me this way."

"I don't speak because I have nothing to say to such a fellow as you are, Captain Crowninshield," replied Edna. "As to what you intend to do with us, I presume it will be just whatever pleases you while we are in your power, as we are now."

Fitz laughed carelessly.

"Just so," he said. "All very true. Now, let me tell you something, Edna. I mean to make you my wife. You are going off with me on my next cruise on the Rocket. And let me tell you something, Brown. These Indians, who are my friends, hold an annual festival in the House of Skulls to-night. At that festival it is the custom to add one skull to their collection, or more if they come handy, and in order to do this they sacrifice any prisoners they happen to have on hand. When we first came here I got into a quarrel with the chief—that's the time you saw me lassoed—and I thought that my skull was destined to go up on the wall, but since then I have made it up with them, although in doing it I had trouble with some of my own crew, and the result was that little racket on the rocks that I think you saw. It's all over now and we are better friends than ever, and those fellows who thought they could down me—no matter what the cause of our quarrel was—will be hunted down to the last man and their skulls will go up on the wall along with yours and George Brandon's. That's the program. The show comes off at midnight, and, let me tell you, Brown, there is no more help for you and George than if you were already dead, unless Edna consents to become my wife, in which case your lives will be spared and you will both be sent back to 'Frisco or to Alaska, just as comes handy. You can chew over that for a while. By the way, one of the squaws will bring you in some dinner presently. Tra-la-la! See you later, Edna. By-by, Harry, old boy."

And Fitz, with a silly smile on his face, sauntered out of the hut and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIII.—George Stumbles into Good Luck.

It was a desperate situation in which Harry and Edna now found themselves, that cannot be denied, but we must leave them in it and return to George, whom we left interviewing the man who had so suddenly confronted him there behind the rock. It would have been exciting enough if there had been only one man to interview, but as a matter of fact there were six. They were all lying flat on the ground behind the big boulder and all were armed with rifles. One, who seemed to be the leader, was watching the entrance to the cave, toward which Fitz and his men were now making their way over the rocks.

"Hist, Sam! Hist! Don't let him say a word!" this man breathed. "Clap your hand over his mouth. We'll interview him later. We must keep our eye on Crowninshield and his gang. I want to see if Charley is with them. I think—yes, there he is!"

So George, who was at once seized, was simply held a prisoner until the last of Fitz's party had entered the cave. The men now all sprang up and began to talk.

"There is no need to be afraid that we will be seen now, boys," said the man. "The point keeps those fellows who went aboard the Rocket from catching on to us and so does this rock. Now, then, young fellow, who are you? One of the sealskin pirates? One of the Crowninshield gang?"

"That's exactly what I am not," replied George, with all the calmness he could muster. "I am an independent American and not a pirate nor a member of any gang, and you Kanucks may as well understand it, too."

The man laughed.

"How do you know that we are Kanucks?" he asked.

"I know it by your talk," replied George; "I've seen enough of you west coast Canadians to be able to pick you out anywhere. Where you come from, though, and what you are doing on the island, I don't pretend to know."

"That will do for you," laughed the man. "You are a slick talker, but I guess you are one of the gang all right."

"You have no business to say so until you have heard who I am and what I am," replied George. "I'd like to know your name?"

"Oh, my name is Davidson," replied the man. "I'm Captain Davidson, of New Westminster. I happen to be sheriff of this district. I suppose you know that this island is Canadian soil?"

"I did not. Let me introduce myself, however. My name is George Brandon. I am in the employ of Doubleday & Downer, of San Francisco. I was wrecked on the steamer Sea Lion, and——"

"Hello! Hello! One of the passengers of the Sea Lion, eh?" broke in Captain Davidson. "My dear sir, I am rejoiced to meet you. When we found the wreck I told my brother here that the chances were we should find some of the passengers or crew on White Gull Island—that's this island, you understand—and now here we have run into you. What do you know about the seal skin pirates? Out with it all. I don't doubt that you will be of the greatest service to us. I suppose you have some papers or something or other about you to prove what you say."

Now George had a dozen letters from his firm snugly stowed away in his pocket and plenty of private papers of his own which set the sheriff's doubts at rest at once. Thus instead of finding himself among enemies these men were suddenly transformed into friends, and half an hour later George and all of Captain Davidson's party stood on the bluff facing the House of Skulls, having passed through the long cave and come out on the shore of Blizzard Bay. George and Captain Davidson had come to a perfect understanding also. The whole story of the wreck of the Sea Lion had been told and George now found himself looking down upon a trim little steamer lying at anchor near the wreck. It was the Canadian revenue cutter Julia, and Captain Davidson was her commander. There was a crew of twenty-six men, all sworn deputy sheriffs, who had come to White Gull Island for no other purpose than to capture the Hon. Fitz, alias the notorious Captain Crowninshield.

"So that's the House of Skulls, is it?" remarked Captain Davidson. "Well, I've seen it before. I may as well admit. Now, look here, Mr. Brandon, this fellow Fitz, as you call him, is an slippery as an eel. Many is the time he has escaped me, and once on this very island, by disappearing in the House of Skulls, just as you describe, but this time I think I have got him foul unless he has seen our boat, which I don't think, seeing that it has just come into the bay after landing us

on the rocks long before the Rocket came around into that cove. What you want is to recover your gold and your friends——"

"My friends first and the gold second," interrupted George.

"Just so," replied Captain Davidson. "It is all one, my boy, and we are going to help you to do it, but what I want is to capture Crowninshield and his whole crew, and, my plans being all laid, I can't change them. You will have to be patient for a while."

"How long shall we remain here?"

"Till midnight," replied the captain. "Understand me, I have a spy right in with the gang. I am expecting every minute to hear from him and then I shall know better what to do, and——"

"Look! Look!" exclaimed one of the men, pointing toward the House of Skulls.

A man had just appeared in the doorway. Looking warily around, he came out and hurried down the hill.

"That's Charley!" cried Captain Davidson. "Now we shall know all about it. George Brandon, that is my spy!"

CHAPTER XXIV.—Conclusion.

The day dragged drearily on and matters at the hut in the Indian village did not change so far as Harry and Edna were concerned. Twice food had been brought to them, but Edna declared she would rather go hungry than eat the horrid mess of stewed fish mixed with something which resembled cracked corn half boiled, and even Harry was only able to taste it, hungry as he was. Night came at last and Fitz had not again showed himself. Whether he had told the truth or not and intended to make his threats good the prisoners could only guess, for neither of the Indians on guard spoke a word of English. Indeed, they would not even answer Harry, who several times opened the door of the hut and tried to make friends with them: each time he was pushed back roughly, so there seemed to be nothing to be gained in that way.

As the evening wore on the excitement in the Indian village increased. Bucks dressed in full war paint and feathers were seen strutting about the camp, children were running around shouting and laughing and every now and then a group of squaws would hurry past the hut dressed in barbaric finery, while big wooden drums were beaten vigorously all the evening, making a deafening noise.

Wearily the evening dragged on. It was now almost midnight. Filled with a thousand fears, Harry and Edna sat on the floor talking in rather a gloomy strain, it must be admitted, when the door was suddenly thrown open and Fitz came staggering in very drunk, but with an air of attempted dignity which would have been comical under other circumstances.

He shut the door carefully and put his finger to his lips for silence.

"Edna," he said, staggering up to the plucky girl, "the time has come I alone can save Harry. Say the word and promise that you will be my wife and it shall be done."

Edna and Harry had both jumped up when

Fitz came in and now stood facing him. Harry was about to speak, but Edna nudged him with her elbow to keep still.

"Come here, Fitz," she said aloud. "I'll say it. I've been thinking it over, and—oh, you villain! I've got you now!"

She flung her arms about Fitz's neck and squeezed his head against her side until he was almost choked, at the same time slapping her hand over his mouth.

"Quick, Harry!" she whispered. "You know what I told you. The chance has come. Act, boy! Act!"

Harry did not need to be told twice. He and Edna had planned it all out, but it had been like hoping against hope to suppose that so good an opportunity would have offered. Harry threw himself upon the struggling Fitz and thrust his handkerchief into his mouth, at the same time dealing him a knock-out blow alongside the head which sent him to the ground.

"Done," said Edna. "Off with his coat and hat. Fix yourself up quick before he comes to himself. What's this, a revolver? It may come handy. Now, are you ready? Come on!"

It was a bold move. Fitz was already groaning. There was no time to be lost. Harry, dressed now in a disguise good enough to deceive the half drunken Indian guards, seized the lantern which Fitz had carried and boldly threw open the door of the hut, carefully closing it behind him. The two Indians merely glanced at him.

"Look after the fellow inside," said Harry, imitating Fitz's voice and his uncertain walk as well as he could. "I'm going with the squaw."

The Indians merely grunted, but made no move. It was part of the bargain that Fitz should go away with Edna, if he chose to do so, and the Indians were completely deceived. Now, the hut stood on the outskirts of the village and close to the exit of the cave beneath the House of Skulls.

Harry had taken particular note of this when they were brought down and he and Edna had discussed this very situation again and again until they felt that they knew exactly what to do.

Down in the village the big drums were beating and the Indians were already forming in solemn procession to begin their ascent out of the hidden valley to the House of Skulls.

Walking boldly around the hut unobserved by any one, Harry and Edna entered the cave. They had made the most of their time, for already Fitz was on his feet and trying to pull his muddled wits together. While he was thus engaged Harry and Edna were running at full speed through the cave and up to the steps, which would soon take them out under the altar and into the House of Skulls.

"Here they come!" panted Harry when they reached the steps. "Faster, Edna! Faster!"

But Edna was doing the best she could, and the enemy was right behind them before they were half way up the steps. It was Fitz, sobered by what had occurred, and his four men, all pretty well intoxicated. The procession was not yet on the move, for the Indians as a body cared but little for Fitz and his affairs, although he had paid them well for the help they had given him in his evil work.

"If we can only move the stone!" gasped Harry. "If we can't we are lost!"

But they could and did, for Harry perceived the secret bolt the instant he flashed his lantern upon the stone. It dropped as he touched it and they passed through not an instant too soon.

"Hold on, there! You are our prisoner!" exclaimed a voice, and a dozen men sprang up from the altar.

"Harry! Edna! Oh, this is great! Captain, these are my friends!"

It was George. Captain Davidson and his men were with them. So was Charley, the spy. They had been waiting for the Indians to bring their prisoners up and were all ready for them when they came.

"Lay for Fitz, George!" gasped Harry. "He's right behind us—don't let him escape."

"Out with the lantern!" whispered George. "Now, then all hands down behind the altar again."

They had but a moment to wait. Fitz was first up and his men followed him.

"Where are they?" he called out thickly, waving a pine torch around, its flaring light flashing upon the skulls.

Well, Fitz found out in a hurry where they were, for in an instant he and his men were looking at the barrels of a dozen revolvers.

"Up hands, Captain Crowninshield!" cried the sheriff. "I've got you at last!"

When a story is ended the best thing to do is to wind it up as quickly as possible, and that is just the way we propose to handle this story of the House of Skulls. Having got what they wanted, Captain Davidson and his men concluded that the best thing they could do was to beat a hasty retreat, and they did it without the least ceremony, leaving the Indians to enjoy their annual skull dance without interference, while they took their prisoners on board of the steamer, which lay waiting for them in Blizzard Bay.

They were not followed by the Indians. So long as the House of Skulls was not disturbed they did not care. The story of the sacrifice was only one of Fitz's lies. Once on board the steamer moved around into the cove, where it took in tow the Rocket, already captured by the sheriff and guarded by his men. It was a night of triumph for the boy miners of Blizzard Bay, but it was a bad time for the Hon. Fitz, who went to New Westminster in irons and was duly lodged in jail in company with fully half his gang. George, Harry and Edna took the next regular steamer from New Westminster down to San Francisco and their gold went with them, minus a liberal reward for the sheriff and each one of his men.

Edna had stories for the Morning Call to last her a month; and, what was better, she did not care whether the paper accepted them or not, for when the gold dust and nuggets were disposed of she, as well as George and Harry, found herself on the right side of "Easy street"; in short they were almost rich. Three months later Fitz went up for ten years, and on the same day George, Harry and Edna returned to White Gull Island, with a band of workmen and every facility for mining. A company had been formed and the claim duly located under the laws of Canada in the name of Sheriff Davidson, who, being a British subject, was able to take title.

Jumping from that date to three years later we

need only add that the Blizzard Bay Mining Company proved a big success and its owners are rapidly becoming rich. George and Mrs. George, formerly Miss Edna Blyburn, live on the island part of the time, but are oftener in San Francisco. Harry is superintendent and stays there all the year round. Quite a settlement has sprung up around Blizzard Bay now and houses and quartz mines and mining shafts are to be seen on all sides. The Indians are perfectly friendly and the stone behind the altar is always turned now, for the road from the prosperous mining town of Blizzard Bay to Indiantown, as the village in the valley is called, is through the House of Skulls.

Next week's issue will contain "DAN AND HIS DOUBLE: or, THE CHURCH UNDER THE RIVER."

RAILROAD OVER THE SAHARA TO RANK WITH GREAT FEATS

The project to throw a railway across the Sahara Desert, which will be one of the greatest feats man has ever attempted in his struggle to subdue the elements, has finally been approved by the French Cabinet after 30 years of discussion.

All the interested Ministries—War, Finance, Interior, Colonies and Public Works—have given their consent, and M. Poincare, the Premier, and M. Tardieu, Minister of Public Works, exchanged letters by which they agreed to submit to Parliament during its present session a bill setting up a commission to study the various routes and to provide a fund of \$500,000 for these studies. The State will then probably hand over the concession to a company representing all the French railway lines.

The main purpose of the new Sahara line, which will probably follow a straight line from Algiers to Timbuctoo, is to bring the tropical products of Central Africa within four or five days of France. The line will also be of military and strategic importance, as it will provide a safe route for the transport of troops to the Mediterranean seaboard. The line will be about 2,500 miles long, without including the lines that already exist.

The government proposes to give free land to colonists as soon as the rich country on the other side of the Sahara has been opened up.

Parliament is expected to approve the project without any opposition, and the investigations to ascertain the best routes will begin next October. —*Brooklyn Eagle.*



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The Boys of Bristow

or

Jack Jerrold's Schooldays

By R. T. BENNETT

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued)

The boy's face lighted up, and he became transformed. Trembling with eager excitement, he asked:

"Oh, Mr. Clare, will you do that for me? I shall repay you in full. Oh, I would do anything to find my father. I would work all the days of my life to pay you. If you will——"

"I will," said the millionaire, in a firm, resolute voice. "Jack Jerrold, I am more interested in your story than you can know. I am shortly to take a trip to Montana, and I will scour the country for some trace of your father. If he is alive, I will find him."

Both had risen. Jack, quivering with emotion and his eyes full of a light of hope, grasped his friend's hand.

"You are kind, Mr. Clare. I will pay you for it some day."

"We will see about that later," said Clare. "Now, my boy, think no more about it. Whatever comes, stick by your mother. She is a good woman and your best friend. You will hear from me."

A few moments later Mr. Clare was on his way home, and Jack was returning to the school. The youth was in a happy and light frame of mind.

He had faith in Mr. Clare, and this gave him hope. He went back to his room and wrote his mother a long letter all about this new friend whom he had found.

The next day a meeting of the committee on the cross-country sports was held. Jack was present. He was named as master of the 'Tigers' pack.

Naturally, Bob Rodney was master of the Turks' pack. It was decided that Nick Small and Ralph Scott should be the hares.

The run would be six miles, and the hares would scatter a trail with tiny bits of paper.

The rules were simple. The hares were to have ten minutes' start. They were to make the course as they chose, over any obstacle and across any stream.

It was the duty of the hounds to, if possible, catch them. The first man in of either pack was winner for that pack. To overtake the hares and touch either was a catch which added greatly to the victory.

Another rule, and an important one, required that the two hares should never be further than speaking distance apart.

In the Tigers' pack were Jack Jerrold, Chick Moore, Billy Bush, Dave Wilson and Pony Jenkins.

The Turks' pack, led by Rodney, consisted of fully a dozen of the day scholars, or town boys. Among these were some excellent runners. Rodney felt confident that his pack would be winners.

Even Professor Bent, or "Old Bushy," as the boys irreverently called him, was on hand. The

hares were sent away with their bags of paper over their shoulders.

They vanished down the road while the referee counted off the minutes. In ten minutes it would seem as if the hares could get a lead that could be cut down only with difficulty. But there were fleet runners among the hounds.

The hounds' pack, held in leash by their masters, waited tensely for the word. Slowly the referee counted off the minutes.

Then he cried suddenly:

"Go!"

The hounds were off like a flash. The chase was begun.

CHAPTER X.

The Great Cross-Country Run.

Only one who had taken part in a cross-country run, or "paper chase," as it is sometimes called, can fully appreciate what a fascinating and exciting sport it is.

Down the road went the pack of hounds on the trail of the hares.

Behind the pack was one boy delegated as the "whip," whose duty it was to urge on stragglers or aid those who were giving out.

The master of the hounds led the way.

Down the dusty highway they followed the scattered trail of paper with keen gaze. Now it turned and crossed a four-railed fence, across a ploughed field and over a purling brook.

Into a copse the scent led them, and over a stone wall into a grove of beech. Here the trail was not so plain, and they had to go slower.

A foot-bridge across a creek was met, and then they emerged from the woods and entered a lane.

This led toward a farmer's house. Cows were huddled in the lane apparently frightened by the troop of boys. But what now proved a genuine obstacle was the farmer himself, a powerful-chested fellow who stood in the center of the lane with a flail in his hand.

"Hold up, thar!" he yelled. "What are yew young bloods running over my land for? Get out of here! Ye can't go any further this way or I'll lay ye out!"

He swung the flail fiercely.

Jack and his pack were compelled to halt. The scent was on the other side of the irate farmer. Just how they were to reach it was a puzzling question.

As Jack and his pack came to a halt, he cried:

"I say, old fellow, we've got to get by, don't you know. The hares will outstrip us."

"I'll strip all ther hairs out of yer fool head!" roared the farmer. "Git off my land!"

For a moment there was silence. Valuable time was being lost. What could be done? Jack Jerrold walked forward.

"Pardon me," he said, in a diplomatic tone, "but I want to tell you that we don't intend to do any harm."

"No, an' I don't intend ye shall."

"We are participating in a harmless game. We will not damage your land or any of your fences. In fact, we will pay you for the privilege of crossing your premises."

"Will ye?" sneered the rustic. "Waal, I'd like

to see ye. Money don't touch me. I'm out for defense of my rights."

Jack Jerrold was a keen student of human nature. He realized at once that it was a waste of breath to argue with the fellow.

He saw his pack's gaze fixed upon him. Jack went nearer and said:

"It's no use, boys. We've got to break by him. We can't pass in any other way."

"All right," declared one of the boys. "Say the word and I'll tip him over."

"I shall dodge him with my men and get past him," said Jack. "We don't want to have any trouble with him."

"All right," agreed the other. "You try your game."

So Jack turned and sprang over the fence. Half of his boys followed and dashed along on the other side.

With a bellow of rage the farmer started to head them off. But as he turned from the middle of the lane and reached the fence, the rest of the pack went by like a flash.

The excited farmer, seeing his mistake, turned back. But it was too late. Meanwhile, Jack and his boys were getting back into the lane fifty yards beyond.

The angry farmer set sail after them, but he might as well have tried to catch a herd of deer.

He was left hopelessly behind.

The hounds now left the farmyard and again found the highway. Here they had a view of the hillside half a mile away.

A wild cry went up from the pack. The hares could be plainly seen getting over a stump fence.

Jack was now once more in sight of Rodney. He knew there was no use of a try for lead until the break for home.

This usually occurred a mile from the finish. The point would be known, for different colored paper would be used by the hares.

Big Rodney was puffing violently in his effort to keep ahead of Jack. The latter was comparatively fresh and running easily. It was plain that the Turks were getting the worst of the run.

Soon they were climbing the hill where the hares had been visible. This hill distressed some of the runners.

Three dropped out of Rodney's pack utterly unable to continue. Dave Wilson dropped out of Jack's pack.

But the others seemed wonderfully fresh. Chick Moore was running easily. Pony Jenkins was tireless. Thus they kept on.

The hill was topped, and now below in the fields were seen the hares again. It seemed as if they had been gained on.

It was now evident to Jack that if any attempt was to be made to lead, now was the time. So he whispered the word to Lilly Bush.

"Tell the fellows to get right down to hard running," he said.

"All right," cried Billy. "Here goes!"

So he passed the word along, and the boys hit up a faster clip. They soon forged ahead, and going down the hill gained fifty yards.

But when the plain below was reached the hares were again out of sight. Jack now pushed on ahead of all.

He was feeling fresh and breathing easy. He

was running ahead of his pack now, and Chick Moore called out:

"Go ahead and make a catch if you can, Jack. I think we have Rodney beaten, all right."

But just then Jack looked ahead and gave a start of surprise. He saw Rodney ahead of his pack, and showing less signs of distress.

It was easy to see that he had got his second wind, and Jack realized that after all he might give him a hard fight in the break for home.

Rodney's face showed renewed confidence. He passed his men and was gaining on Jack rapidly.

This, however, did not worry Jack, who kept up an even pace and saved his strength. He knew wisely that this would tell in the finish.

Further off drew Rodney. They were now approaching a high sand-bank. The hares had chosen the most difficult course they could find. The trail led up over this sand-bank, a hard climb of fifty feet.

Jack reached the summit first. Then, with a thrill, as he recovered his breath, he saw Scotty not one hundred yards distant and just turning into a lane which led down to the main highway.

Rodney had now gained the top of the bank, and saw the same thing. The big fellow saw that Jack was reckoning upon the possibility of a catch.

Rodney's face flushed with anger and jealousy. He started forward with all his speed, determined to thwart Jack.

Jack knew that the lane, where it debauched into the highway, would be the point from whence the break for home would be made. There was no time to lose.

Jack's pack had now reached the top of the sand-bank, and he heard Chick Moore shout:

"Go in, Jack! Make the catch!"

At once Jack bounded forward. He gained on the hare with tremendous rapidity. Rodney lowered his head and plunged forward also.

Nearer Jack drew to Scotty. The little fellow began to scatter the colored paper, and then made the break for home. The cry of the pack went up on the air, and now came the most exciting part of the run.

Into the highway they turned, and far beyond Jack saw the finish line, with hundreds of the academy boys waiting to see them come in.

Nick Small was far ahead, and it was plain that he would not be caught. But Scotty was losing ground fast. Nearer they drew to the finish line.

It was now not a quarter of a mile away. Jack was within a few yards of the hare. In a few moments he would certainly have made the catch.

But just then something happened. Rodney was near Jack. His face was swollen with rage and discomfiture. Again the malicious part of his nature got the best of him.

He could not bear that Jack Jerrold should triumph. At any cost he must frustrate his purpose.

There was but one way to do this. He was close upon Jack, and the latter was about to reach out and touch Scotty. Big Rodney lunged forward and pretended to fall. His right hand caught Jack's heel and threw him heavily.

Jack went down in a heap, and his head struck a stone in the road. He was rendered unconscious.

(To be continued)

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15, 1928

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

A PLACE IN THE SUN

Taking it literally Kaiser Wilhelm's figurative phrase, "a place in the sun," describes the United States. Since the acquisition of outlying dependencies after the Spanish-American War, it has always been daytime somewhere under the Stars and Stripes. And surveys have now been far enough completed to indicate that even in our territory within North America it is always sun-up. When the sun is setting at Attu, the farthest of the Aleutians, it is also rising in Maine at Eastport and Grand Manan.

MONKEYS BASK IN VIOLET RAYS

Several monkey cages in the Berlin Zoo are being equipped with quartz lamps in the hope that by this means of furnishing ultra-violet rays tuberculosis will be avoided among the sensitive tropical specimens. The monkeys seem to enjoy the bright light and bask in the rays for hours at a time.

Veterinaries have also discovered that some of the tropical animals are unhealthy because their food lacks vitamin "D," which is abundant in plants exposed to the rays of the glaring Equator sun. These vitamins are now produced synthetically from coal tar, are mixed with the daily rations and are declared by attendants to be producing an excellent effect.—*N. Y. Times.*

JAR-PROOF WATCHES ARE NOW INTRODUCED

Watches embodying new features of design and use of metals, with and without stone settings, are now being exhibited in practical models. They are made so as to stand a great deal of jarring and shocking. In fact they may be dropped or worn under the most trying conditions with little danger of injuring the movement. This durability is achieved by the introduction of a spring protective device around the balance staff, which is the most delicate and intricate part of any watch.

These watches are being shown in oblong cases, with fine chasing on the exposed side. The backs are finished with cut-out borders, leaving the centre free for monograms.

PREDICT WIRELESS MOVIES FROM NEW YORK TO LONDON

When a new British invention—a wireless-operated tele-cinematograph—has been developed it is predicted that it will be possible to see a film in London one hour after it has been taken in New York.

The film cannot be transmitted at the same speed at which it was taken, but it can be sent at the rate of two "stills" a second. After reception on the other side it can be developed and screened at the normal rate of sixteen pictures a second.

The inventors assert that it will be possible to broadcast a football match at Glasgow to movie fans all over Great Britain the same afternoon.—*N. Y. Times.*

WHERE INDIANS FOUND WOOD FOR BOWS

Medicine bow, Wyo., and the Medicine Bow National Forest derive their names from the fact that in early years the Indians came there from the surrounding territory to make their bows from the mountain mahogany which grows in abundance in that vicinity. Here, too, the Indians found pine trees of a certain species which grew in thick stands, straight, tall and trim. When overcrowded the trees were small, and the Indians found them desirable for the poles of their tepees. From this the tree gained the name of lodgepole pine.

Now the lodgepole pine is used primarily for railroad ties in the Western States. In the Medicine Bow National Forest it is cut under Government regulation, floated down stream to the nearest railroad town and shipped to Laramie for preservative treatment. Government supervision insures the perpetuation of the supply.

JAPANESE COURTESY RULES IN TRAFFIC

Perhaps New York, with its street traffic problem and its innumerable automobile accidents, might take a leaf out of the book of Japan for the regulation of such matters. There moral suasion is the order of the day, with all possible courtesy. The streets are placarded with conspicuous posters, some of which read as follows: "Oh, automobile! You are beautiful; you are swift; you are powerful. But do not take advantage of your beauty, your speed and your power."

"Be considerate of your little brothers, so inferior to you—the dog, the horse and the pedestrian."

"The dog is afraid of your balloon tires, which so easily may crush him. Give him room that he may pass in safety."

"The horse is frightened at your noise, your smoke, your bad odors. Avoid offending his ears, his eyes, his nostrils."

"The pedestrian seems to be, of all, of the least account to you. Yet you would do well to have pity on him; for tomorrow he, too, may be driving a car."

A Scarred Hand

I was sitting in my private office one bright spring morning, about four years ago, when my clerk entered and informed me that a young lady wished to see me.

"Show her in at once," I said, and a moment later my visitor stood before me.

She was a young girl of about twenty, a blonde of the rarest type with deep blue eyes and features of Grecian regularity.

"Be seated, miss," I said, handing her a chair.

"You must have heard, sir, of the murder of Mr. Temple, which took place last night," she said.

"Yes, I read of it in the papers this morning. The old gentleman was found dead in his bed this morning, stabbed to the heart, and his son, Harry, was arrested for the crime."

"Yes, sir, but he is not guilty."

"Appearances are frightfully against him. The knife with which the deed was committed was found lying by the side of the bed, and has been proven to be the property of the young man. Drops of blood were found upon his night clothes and upon the floor of his room, which adjoined his father's. This is strong evidence against him."

"True, sir; but I repeat, he is innocent."

Old Mr. Temple had been a wealthy Broadway merchant for many years, and was a man of acknowledged probity.

His son, on the contrary, had the reputation of being somewhat dissipated in his habits and a source of great anxiety to the old gentleman.

But who was this young girl who seemed so certain of his innocence?

She perhaps read this inquiry in my eyes, for before I could reply to her question, she said:

"I, Mr. Ashley, am Henry Temple's wife."

"His wife. I was not aware that he was married."

"Mr. Ashley, for a year I have been the governess of old Mr. Temple's motherless little girl, during which time I have resided in his house. Of course Henry and I were brought together a great deal, and the result was that we became much attached to each other and were engaged to be married about six months ago.

"Old Mr. Temple approved the match, but requested that we should wait one year until Henry reached his majority, for he is now not quite twenty-one.

"Now, Mr. Ashley, my husband is arrested for a foul crime of which he is not guilty, and I want you to save him. He sent me to you asking me not to leave you until I had obtained your consent to take his case. Oh, sir, do not refuse me!"

"Well, Mrs. Temple," I said, "it looks like a desperate case, but I will take it."

"And you will save him," she cried. "I feel certain of it, sir."

She drew off her glove and producing a pocket-book, took from it a five hundred dollar note.

"Accept this," she said, "as a retainer."

At this moment I noticed that her beautiful, shapely hand was disfigured by a long scar,

stretching from her wrist to the root of her middle finger.

I took the note and agreed to visit young Temple at once.

I did so, and was, notwithstanding my prejudices against him, convinced that he was not guilty. He vehemently denied all participation in the crime.

"Have you no suspicion of who is the guilty party?"

"No, sir; I have no reason to suspect anyone."

"Your room adjoins your father's, I believe. Did you hear no voice during the night?"

"No, sir; none whatever. I slept very soundly—so much so, in fact, that if I did not know this to be impossible, I should almost imagine that I was drugged. I was hardly able to keep awake long enough to undress when I went to bed."

"What did you eat or drink before you went to bed?"

"Both my father and myself took a glass of sherry just before retiring."

This was about all I was able to learn from young Temple.

On leaving him I went to the house where the murder had been committed.

Before I left the place I had made a thorough examination of the body of old Mr. Temple, and of such of his private papers as I could gain access to.

Among this documents was a dairy in which the old gentleman had apparently recorded each evening, the events of the day. The entry for May 6th—the night of the murder—read as follows:

"I cannot write the horrible discovery I have this day made. But thank heaven, I have learned the truth in time. He is saved. To-morrow he shall know all. But sleep overpowers me, I can scarcely see the words I am writing, and must perforce, put away my book for to-night. What ails me?"

So old Temple, too, had been oppressed by this strange drowsiness. What did it earn?

I descended to the dining-room and began a search for that bottle of sherry.

But there was no sherry to be seen. It had been removed.

A servant passed the door.

"See here, sir," I said, "I would like a glass of sherry and I can't find any here."

"The decanter was sent up to Miss Atkins' room this morning, sir, and hasn't been brought down yet," he replied.

"Miss Atkins—who is she?"

"The governess, sir, Miss Mabel's governess."

Ah, yes, Henry Temple's young wife, whose marriage had not yet become known.

"How did the decanter happen to be taken to Miss Atkins' room?" I asked.

"She sent for it, sir; she took a glass just before she went out."

"Is Miss Atkins in now?"

"No, sir, but I expected her in about half an hour."

"Well, tell her I would like to see her as soon as she comes in. I will wait in the library for her."

As yet I had no suspicion of the horrible truth.

I only wanted to see Mrs. Temple in order to get the decanter from her for the purpose of having its contents analyzed.

I went to the library and seated myself in an easy chair to await the young lady's arrival.

The table was strewn with papers. I picked up the one nearest me and to my surprise found it to be a San Francisco daily paper, dated more than a year back.

I curiously ran my eyes over its columns, and presently my attention was arrested by an article bearing the heading, "A Female Fiend."

I began the perusal of the article.

It read as follows:

"Yesterday afternoon, after partaking of a hearty dinner, the family of Mr. Thomas Granville, of 87 G— street, were seized with the most alarming symptoms, and it soon became evident that they had been poisoned. Within an hour Mrs. Granville and her two children, both boys, expired in great agony. Mr. Granville is still very ill, but will probably recover. The food was examined and the presence of arsenic immediately detected in several articles. In the midst of the confusion, the absence of Miss Elmore, the children's governess, was noticed, and it was discovered that she had the day before purchased a quantity of arsenic from a neighboring druggist. The motive of the crime is supposed to have been revenge, the governess having had a quarrel with Mrs. Granville about a week since, during which in the heat of passion, she made certain threats for which she afterwards apologized and which were overlooked."

"This Miss Elmore, as she called herself, was first employed by Mrs. Granville about a year ago. She brought no recommendations from former employers, but her appearance was so prepossessing that Mrs. Granville accepted her at once.

"The appearance of this woman is certainly not such as would lead one to suppose her guilty of so terrible a crime. She is about twenty-three years of age, quite small, with a good form, very light complexion, golden hair, blue eyes and regular features. One distinguishing mark by which the police hope to be able to identify her, is a long scar upon the back of her right hand."

I stopped to read no more. I sprang from my seat and summoning a servant directed him to show me to Miss Atkins' apartment. He hesitated, but I soon convinced him that I meant what I said and he obeyed me.

The next fifteen minutes I spent in the governess' room, engaged in an examination of her effects.

This examination finished, I returned to the library.

I had scarcely seated myself when Mrs. Temple entered the room.

"You wish to see me, a servant tells me," she said.

"I have discovered that Henry Temple is an innocent man."

"Oh, thank heaven for that! But how can you be sure of that, sir?"

"Because I have discovered the real criminal," I replied, looking her straight in the eye.

"Oh, Mr. Ashley, who is it?" she cried.

"A woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes; a woman, the secret of whose disgraceful past old Mr. Temple had discovered, and who took this means to silence him before he had divulged the truth to his son. A woman who purchased an ounce of laudanum at Brown's drug store yesterday—I have the bottle in my possession—and who mixed the drug with the sherry which she knew father and son would drink before retiring; her object being to induce them to sleep soundly in order that her foul crime might be safely performed. At the dead of night she killed the old man with a knife belonging to Henry Temple."

In an hour she was lodged in jail.

Henry Temple was soon released. At first he refused to believe the terrible story I had to tell him, but when he was at last convinced of the truth his love for the wretched woman he had made his wife turned to hatred and he swore to be avenged for his father's murder.

She was convicted and sentenced to death, but the night before the day appointed for her execution she committed suicide with a dagger which she managed to secure in some unknown manner.

It seems that old Mr. Temple, on making the discovery regarding her past life, went to her at once, and informed her that he knew all, and that in consideration of her engagement to his son and the disgrace which an exposure would cause, he would give her twelve hours to leave the house which he agreed to permit her to do unmolested.

She consented to leave the next morning, and the old gentleman was to tell his son the whole truth after her departure.

But she had no idea of resigning Henry Temple, whose wealth she coveted, and she took the means of ridding herself of his father, with which the reader has already been made acquainted.

She attempted to throw the burden of the crime upon her husband, because all she cared for was on account of the money he possessed, and to use her own words, she "much preferred being a wealthy young widow to an obedient wife."

So carefully had she laid her plans that she had no hesitation whatever in coming to me in compliance with her husband's request; for she felt certain that her guilt would never be detected.

But she was not aware of the existence of the California paper from which old Mr. Temple had learned the fatal secret and which was the direct means of her own destruction.

BLIND MAN TRAMPS 10 MILES DAILY ON A 33-FOOT PORCH

A daily tramp of ten miles along his thirty-three-foot piazza, while behind his sightless eyes pass visions of mountains, shore and country, keeps William Richardson fit and healthy at the age of 80.

Clad in a gray linen coat and khaki trousers, his flowing white beard blown by the breeze, Richardson tramps steadily back and forth on the porch. At the turn which marks each quarter mile, he pushes down a movable leather knob on his bamboo cane and thus keeps a log of his journey.

Every day for nearly three years, except Sundays, when he goes to the Quaker church, he has done his ten miles.

GOOD READING

ALARM CLOCK WAKENS HEN

An alarm clock turns on a battery of electric lights in the hen house at the Idlewild poultry farm to awaken the chickens at 4 o'clock every morning. The owners of the chickens believe early risers are the best layers. No chicken has yet been heard to say: "I guess I'll just roll over for a little nap." What's going to happen to the historic rooster which from time immemorial has been acting as the community arouser with his crow?

BOYS' "WHO'S WHO OF HEROES" LISTS LINDBERGH FIRST AND "MY DAD" LAST

"Who would you like to be if you were not yourself?"

That question, propounded to 682 boys of Belleville, N. J., by George R. Gerhard, Supervisor of Schools, disclosed that twenty-three individuals are objects of hero worship in Belleville.

Col. Charles A. Lindbergh, with 363 ballots, was an easy winner. The other votes were cast as follows:

President Coolidge, 110; Henry Ford, 66; Thomas A. Edison, 27; Gov. Alfred E. Smith, 16; Gen. John J. Pershing, 14; Gene Tunney, 13; John D. Rockefeller, 12; Jack Dempsey, 11; Babe Ruth, 10; Gov. A. Harry Moore, 7; Chief Justice Taft, 5; Bobby Jones, golfer, 4; Jack Sharkey, boxer, 4; Mayor Walker, 4; Red Grange, football player, 3; Commander Richard E. Byrd, 3; Rogers Hornsby, baseball player, 2; Clarence Chamberlin, 2; J. P. Morgan, 2; Benito Mussolini, 2, and "My Dad," 2.

As the balloting was anonymous, the fathers of all 682 boys can go right on believing they stand first in the estimation of their offspring.

RADIO'S LONG WAVES AS BOON TO SICK INDICATED IN EXPERIMENTS

Long-metre ether waves, originally harnessed for radio, may prove a boon to medical science in the treatment of convalescent patients, Prof. J. C. McLennan of the University of Toronto said, recently.

Experiments now under way, he told members of the Canadian club, indicate the possibility that by application of the waves any known body temperature required to destroy disease-forming organisms can be attained without danger of reaction on the patient.

The danger of collapse after the crisis in pneumonia, brought on by inability of the body to raise its own temperature, may be overcome if it is found that the waves can be controlled satisfactorily, he said.

After it was found that radio operators exposed to long waves experienced a sudden rise in body temperature, physicians called in, Prof. McLennan said, found that the waves could be controlled to increase the body temperature to a given point but no further.

DOG BIRTH CONTROL URGED IN LONDON TO REDUCE CANINES

Birth control among London's dog population is urged by Miss E. S. Kennedy, superintendent of the North London home of Our Dumb Animal Friends League.

Fifty thousand unwanted dogs are put to a painless death in London annually. Owners can not or will not pay the taxes on most of these dogs.

"The way out of the difficulty is to prevent so many dogs being bred," said Miss Kennedy. "It might improve conditions generally if the tax on dogs were bigger. And if a tax were put on puppies at the age of six weeks people would keep only the puppies they wanted and would have the others painlessly destroyed immediately."

Many dogs are lost because owners take off their collars at night. Miss Kennedy suggests that owners merely loosen the collars.

Ten thousand lost dogs are returned annually to owners in London by various animal refuges. It is chiefly women who are employed in these animals homes, as it has been found that women are more successful than men in handling strange dogs. No whips are used in handling fierce dogs, as it has been found by women superintendents that fierceness in dogs is invariably due to fear, and kindness overcomes this more effectively than whipping.

MUSICAL PAGEANTRY TO HONOR SCHUBERT

Five hundred of Austria's best singers, carrying flaming torches, will march through darkened, tortuous streets of sleeping Vienna in the wee, sma' hours of Tuesday. They will inaugurate the celebration of the 131st anniversary of the death of Franz Schubert.

The singers, proceeding to the composer's old home in Walnut street, near the American Legation, will, in reverently subdued voices, chant "The Night," which was practically Schubert's farewell lyric.

Around the immortal music master's former home, which is now a museum, will be grouped Vienna's music world and several thousand university students dressed in the quaint costume of Schubert's day.

As a tribute to his memory Schubert's famous "Serenade" will be played on a thousand instruments.

In other parts of Austria impressive ceremonies will be held to commemorate the writer's symphonies, sonatas, masses, operas, lyrics, oratorios, cantataes and marches.

On Nov. 19, the anniversary of the day Schubert died, Austria will hold even more elaborate commemorative exercises, transcending all others in size, scope and historic interest.

The principal feature will be the assembling of thousands of singers from all over the world to pay tribute to the musical genius who, according to Schumann, "could set a handbill to music," but who was so poor at his death his clothes had to be sold to pay doctors' bills and funeral expenses.

CURRENT NEWS

RATS FROM FLOOD ALARM LONDONERS

Rats which the recent floods have driven from the riverside have become a serious menace in South Lambeth. Suffering from hunger the rats have invaded the living rooms of houses in the daytime in Conroy street in search of food even though people are in the rooms. At night they enter bedrooms and terrify the occupants.

NEW BELLBOYS' UNION OUT FOR BIGGER TIPS

The bellboys' Protective Association of Illinois is launched and trying to herd all the "fronts" in Chicago into a union.

C. R. Heffernan is secretary of the union, and for \$2 a month and \$5 initiation he promises the boys sick benefits, medical attention, bigger tips and better working conditions. The wage question will come later.

"It'll go over all right," said Mr. Heffernan. "The bellhops have felt for a long time that they ought to be organized. So we are taking the job. We'll be affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Everything will be regular."

KANSAS BACHELORS' ALLIANCE TO DISCIPLINE FIRST DESERTER

Emporia's Bachelor Alliance, organized two weeks ago by 100 unmarried men as a protest against leap year advances, has had its first desertion. Dan Davies, a cattleman living near Reading, applied for a marriage license from Judge Wilford Riegel, who aroused the bachelors by publishing a list of men eligible for marriage.

Dave Wright, President of the Bachelor's Alliance, and Dale Henry, its secretary, declared Davies's marriage was an out-and-out desertion and would be treated as such. "He probably will be read out of the club," Mr. Wright declared.

By breaking out of the organization Davies qualified to collect a variety of prizes offered by married men of the town to the first of Judge Riegel's bachelors who went to the altar. The awards range from a T-bone steak offered by an Emporia café to a pair of shoes put up by a merchant in Georgia.—N. Y. Times.

DEAF MUTE SEEKS JOB AS FRENCH EXECUTIONER

A deaf and dumb hairdresser is among many candidates for the job of executioner of France. The job, to their disappointment, is not open, for Anatole Deibler, who inherited it, doesn't intend to resign.

Besides the coiffeur, a boxer, a lawyer, three engineers and a bridge builder have asked for the appointment as headsman, a mechanical trade now since the guillotine does the work.

Deibler, believing in heredity in office, but having no son, is meantime training his nephew to set up the "widow," as the machine is called, and to press the button that drops the triangular blade. He hopes thus to offer a well-trained man as his successor when the time comes for him to retire to the country and "plant his cabbage," the ambition of the French bourgeoisie.

BEETHOVEN MS. SELLS FOR \$5,000

Almost \$5,000 was the price which a Beethoven manuscript brought at a recent auction in Berlin. It was the original orchestra score to the march in the opera "Fidelio." Sharp bidding ensued, and a record price of 19,250 marks was obtained.

Other Beethoven manuscripts did not go so well. Thus the composer's first draft of his song "Adelaide" brought only 2,600 marks, and a letter to Zelter 2,050 marks.

The Beethoven House at Bonn at the same auction acquired a letter by Richard Wagner concerning Beethoven's C Sharp Minor Quartet for 72 marks.

JUVENILE BOOKS LEAD BRITISH PUBLICATIONS

Juvenile literature and fiction took the lead in the increase of books published during 1927 which totaled 13,810, a greater number than in any year in the history of British publishing, and 608 more than in the previous record of 1925.

The bulk of the increase is the new editions of which 666 more appeared than in 1926. This suggests, says the *Publishers' Circular*, that the number of books with sufficient vitality for a reappearance is increasing.

The greatest increases are shown in juvenile literature, 412; fiction, 404; religion, 137; poetry and drama, 89; medicine, 73; education, 57; descriptive and travel, 52.

The biggest decrease is in technology, 124; history, 40; fine arts, 39, and law, 36.

SEA LION TRAINER FOR GERMAN IN SWIMMING ENDURANCE TEST

With a sea lion as a training partner and pace-maker, Otto Kemmerich of Husum, German professional swimming champion, hopes to establish a new world endurance record of 48 hours, about Easter. Kemmerich, who ranks next to Ernest Vierkoetter in Germany's list of long distance swimmers, recently purchased a two-year-old sea lion from Hamburg circus managerie.

The beast quickly became attached to his new master and learned to accompany him on practice swims. He now acts as a pacemaker, keeping a short distance ahead of his master. Whether the sea lion will remain at his master's side throughout the world championship attempts is a question interesting not only swimming fans but zoologists.

Kemmerich expects to make another attempt to swim the English Channel with the sea lion as a possible strong-arm bodyguard. His previous attempt to swim the Channel in 1926 failed when a large fish attacked him.

As a part of his training for his world endurance attempt, Kemmerich gives an exhibition swim every Sunday at Wandsbeck, near Hamburg, where he and the animal swim 12 hours and longer without interruption. Last summer he swam around the Island of Heligoland.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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